

ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY

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The Fundamental Beliefs and Principles of Islam and their Application to Practical Life

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INTRODUCTION

Attempt shall be made in this book to bring out and elucidate the basic concepts of Islam. Islam is the oldest as well as the youngest of all the great religions professed and partially practised by large portions of humanity. Islam is as old as God and His creation. Before humanity appeared on the scene it was the religion of the universe and the creatures that inhabited it, and it continues to be the religion of nature. According to the creed of the Qur'an, the first man of knowledge was a Muslim. He was created with infinite potentialities to assimilate divine attributes in order to fit himself as the vicegerent of God on earth. His previous state was a paradisial condition in which he lived the life of nature, adapted by instinct to his environment from which he gained his sustenance by instinctive efforts. The transition from that nature was a shock of maladjustment. Some other religions start the life of humanity with what is termed the Fall of Man. The Qur'an, too, uses that term for the transitional jerk which granted man free-will, with possibilities of going against nature and the God of nature. The Christian version of the legend depicts the expulsion of man from paradise because of having eaten the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. According to the Qur'an, it was not knowledge but ignorance that drove him out; it was the misuse of the free-will granted to him that caused his fall. But the Qur'an does not base its superstructure on the fall. Sin or grace, virtue or vice are not inherited. Man's responsible existence started with his free-will and his endowment of knowledge. Humanity is not tainted with any

original sin because of the disobedience of the primeval progenitor. Faith in the moral order which Islam enjoins presupposes free-will. If man were born with an incorrigible congenital bent towards sin, the Creator would be more diabolical than divine. Such a God would neither be good nor just. The Qur'an, therefore, emphatically repudiates the false doctrine of the original sin, transmitted by inheritance. In the moral realm 'no one carries the burden of another.' 'Men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn' (iv.32). Humanity starts whith the emergence of free-will which may manifest itself as disobedience to God or nature or the laws of his being. Man does not start life with perverted instincts. All of his instincts, like the instincts of the animal, are instruments of the preservation of life; it is only with false knowledge and perverted free-will that disorder sets in. 'The nature of Allah in which He has made men: that is the right religion' (xxx. 30). The Prophet said, 'Man is born with divinely gifted nature; he brings no creed with him; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian'. It is not any inheritance of perverted instincts, but the social inheritance which presses him to follow artificial man-made creeds. Islam is not a creed in this sense; it is the religion of nature. Nature within him, rightly adjusted to the nature without him, will harmonise him with himself and with God.

Islam is not a creed which originated with Muhammad. The Prophet held that from Adam downwards all the genuine religious teachers, commissioned by God to preach and practise truth, have professed only one and the same religion for which the Arabic word is *Islam*. *Islam* means peace, and it also means surrender to the will of God. These two meanings have a common psychological root. God means the universal creative and preservative will of existence; God stands for harmony and anything that stands for conflict is anti-God. No man can be at peace with

himself or with others or with his environment in general unless he voluntarily surrenders his will to the universal will. Sin is nothing but self-centred particularity. It is egotism that refuses to recognise that the good of all is the good of everyone. There is no other religion besides Islam which has a connotational designation. Christianity is named after Christ, Buddhism is the creed of Buddha and Zoroastrianism is the religion of Zoroaster. Muhammad forbade that the religion preached by him should be named after him. He said, `It is not only my religion; it was as well the religion of Christ and Moses and innumerable other prophets raised among other people.' `And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them (xxxv. 24).

Islam being the religon of harmony, it promulgated the doctrine of the unity of religions. Islam, however, considers theistic religion only as true religion; so its doctrine of the unity of religions covers only those creeds in which the oneness of God was realised; all else is barbarity and ignorance which degrades man to such an extent that he becomes subhuman. The Qur'an says, `They are as cattle; nay they are in worse error' (vii. 179). In the sense in which the term is used by the Qur'an, Islam is a universal religion. Wherever there is true religion there is no monopoly of salvation. The Qur'an says that Abraham was not a Jew and Christ was not a Christian; their religion was the same primeval and eternal Islam, the religion of the identification of human and divine will to attain that perfect harmony which is the ideal urge and goal, not only of humanity but of entire creation. `And the Jews say, the Christians do not follow anything (good); and the Christians say, the Jews do not follow anything (good)' (ii.113). Both of them assert for their respective groups the monopoly of salvation. The Qur'an categorically repudiates all ideas of monopoly in truth or salvation. Salvation or peace here and hereafter is for him who submits himself to God and does virtuous

deeds. These are the only essentials of religion according to the Qur'an. Belief in the moral order or the law of moral compensation along with belief in God, the source of the moral and natural order, completes the faith of man if he is also the doer of good deeds. All the rest of Islam is a system of corollaries that follow logically from this basic outlook. Anyone within the pale of orthodox Islam or outside it who has this outlook has attained truth. The Qur'an, at more than one place, has in so many words laid stress on this attitude. 'Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve' (ii. 62). This is not mere religious tolerance which is a very negative attitude; it is a positive injunction to extend the brotherhood of faith to all those who have the essentials of faith although they may differ in their laws and ritual. Like every other creed or discipline, Islam too has its ritual but it gives a very subordinate and secondary place to all ritual. Taking one instance out of many, it is enjoined on every Muslim to turn towards the direction of the central holy temple of Islam, the Ka'ba, while offering the prescribed prayers. But fearing lest it be considered as part of the essence of prayers, the Qur'an says there is no special virtue in this that you turn your face to the East or the West; it says, 'And Allah's is the East and the West; therefore whither you turn, thither is Allah's purpose' (ii. 115); 'It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East or the West' (ii. 177).

Islam was not satisfied with preaching only broad principles; it was considered essential to create a system and a discipline which should embody those principles in individual and social life. It is a complete code of life based on a definite outlook on life. No teacher of a great religion was afforded by history the opportunity to pass through all

the essential phases of social, economic and political existence. The Prophet of Islam started as a poor shepherd and worker; then travelled as a young man with commercial caravans; then acted as a commercial agent; then led an ideally happy life as a husband and a father; then cried as a persecuted warner against the injustice of man. He conquered his enemies primarily by love, and, when necessity compelled, used the minimum physical force to overwhelm the savage persecutors; then, having conquered them, forgave them with openhearted generosity, for which history offers no parallel. He set up a state from a scratch among a people who had no political experience beyond their tribal organisations, and promulgated laws that were more advanced and more humane than his contemporary world dreamed of. Then he dealt with international relations in peace and war and finally completed his work having chalked out a system of social justice based on liberty, fraternity and equality embodied not only in a moral code but in a definite framework of economic justice. The same golden thread of humanity and simplicity runs throughout the web and woof of the variegated pattern of his manysided life. At the end he was the same simple and modest poor man as he had started. Does history offer any parallel to this life which looks like the life of all humanity concentrated in an individual existence?

Islam as a system of life is a mirror of the life and outlook of Muhammad. His scripture too may be taken as his biographical sketch and a code of his ethics and conduct. A person once asked `A'yesha, the wife of the Prophet, to describe the morals and manners of Muhammad, to which she replied: `Don't you read the Qur'an? That reflects the morals of Muhammad'.

The rapid and all-round progress and spread of Islam and its assumption of world leadership in civilisation

and culture was due to the definiteness of its healthy outlook and its embodiment in a progressive system. It spread rapidly because it offered equality before law and social justice to large groups of humanity who had suffered under all types of tyranny. After the lapse of some centuries the original momentum weakened and the liberal and progressive system of Islam, too, was fossilised into various specimens of orthodoxy. Islam's legal system had progressed with the changing conditions and the great jurists had continued to promulgate systems of law and practice for adjustment to new conditions, trying to adhere scrupulously to the spirit of Islam which was identical with the spirit of social justice. Islamic life had originated in a system but it remained an open system so long as the life-urge of the Muslim peoples was creative and progressive.

The Muslims believe that the essentials of Islam are eternal and so is the system called Shari'at. Attempt will be made in this book to bring out the universal and eternal character of Islam. The belief of the author is that the essential framework of the Shari'at too, which can be studied from the teachings of the Qur'an and the authentic sayings and practices of the Prophet, rests on eternal verities. It is a creed that can never become outworn. It is not like the creeds that have their day and cease to be. Human history is a limbo of outworn creeds and discredited dogmas. But Islam does not insist on belief in any dogma which is to be believed without evidence or against the dictates of reason, observation and experience. It is said that science has killed all religious dogmas but it is itself based on the unity and uniformity of existence, which, according to Islam, is a corollary from the unity of God. The God of Islam is a rational God, Who manifests existence according to measure and according to immutable laws. Could this belief be discarded even by a rationalist materialist? Islam says that matter is only an aspect of existence which is a

manifestation of something akin to the human spirit. Has not materialistic naturalism already died a natural death? Even the matter of the materialist, having been reduced to abstract energy and abstract mathematics, has been reduced to mental symbols. Is not probing into the depths of the mind and proving its undreamt of potentialities leading man towards spirit and away from the blind mechanism of matter? Has not a doctrine of evolution in its various presentations driven man more and more towards creative and ameliorative tendencies of existence? Can the essentials of morality be successfully contradicted even by the apparent relativity of morals and manners? Is not the essential unity of humanity being established in spite of the conflicts of individuals and groups? Can it ever become irrational to believe that the gradations of existence extend above the material, vital and the mental level? Can it ever be demonstrated that the soul is a product and an attribute of the body and perishes with it? Can it ever be demonstrated that our spatial and temporal existence is coextensive with entire being? Can it ever be contradicted that life must strive towards more and more comprehensive harmonies or the particulars live and move and have their being in the universals and all the universals are ultimately unified in one great infinite universal?

The future of Islam is the future of religion in general. If religion has a survival value, Islam is bound to survive. Muslim peoples everywhere have begun to suffer from the same malady from which all orthodoxies have always suffered. The universal elements of Islam have got inextricably mixed up with the accretions of ages. Into a religion without dogmas, dogmas have installed themselves. Muslims too have become monopolists of salvation, a misbehaviour against which they were warned by the Qur'an. Legal systems too have become fossilised and blind obedience to the rulings of jurists is considered an essential

part of faith. What happened to others before them is happening to them; they have forgotten the difference between eternal laws and changing regulations. Life means change. As long as an organism lives, it changes in its external adaptations. Life is creative and is a self-enriching diversity. Islam was a simple faith in essential virtues and in the unity of God. All its early self-preservative wars were fought to end fanaticism. It preached freedom of conscience and respect for other creeds; it offered protection to others and equal civil liberties even to those who differed in their convictions. It offfered unstinted praise to the virtuous followers of other creeds. It is a religion which accepts life and wants to get the best out of it by virtue, reason and effort. Nietzsche classified religions as those that say Yes to life and those that say No to life. Islam says Yes to life, but it can be enjoyed only with restraint and limitations which are natural and rational and which the Qur'an calls the limitations of God. Shall a creed that embraces entire life and opens before it unlimited vistas ever become outworn?

No movement in the world drops as a bolt from the blue; even a revolutionary movement has some connections with the immediate or even a remote past; reformist movements too have much that has its roots in the cultural heritage of a nation. It is in a nation or a people that a new dispensation is preached. The social, economical and historical background acts upon and is reacted upon by the new movement. Then there are differences in the psychology of the peoples. Different peoples react differently even to similar philosophies of life. As a creed or a movement spreads among widely different peoples, sometimes it is changed as much as it changes them. All these historical, social and psychological factors are inherent in the relativity of life. The origin and the early setting of Islam too is not an exception to this. There is much in that early setting that is inheritance from the past not only of the

Arabs but of the Israelites and the Semitic people in general. The religious outlook of Islam has an Israelite background which is evident throughout the Qur'an. Islam calls itself the creed of Abraham and all the other Israelite prophets. So far as the fundamentals of religion are concerned, Islam claims no originality. In much of its ritual and religious practices as well as in many of its laws and injunctions, the superstructure is raised on earlier deep-rooted traditions. A Muslim is asked to believe in not only what has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad but to all the prophets among all the peoples that have gone before him; Islam is a great believer in the continuity of human culture and the essential unity of its fundamentals.

If a new religion is preached to a people, it must be made understandable to them; a truth, in order to be perceived, must be apperceived, that is to say, brought into relation with the previous knowledge and experience of the percipient. The vehicle of communication must be the language of the people. These simple truths have been enunciated by the Qur'an itself. `and We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people' (xiv.4). `A book of which the verses are made plain, an Arabic Qur'an for a people to know' (xli. I). Now a language is an expression of the life and psychology of a people; it embodies their outlook on life in its words and expressions. Therefore we must find much in the Qur'an which is rooted in the psychology of the people. No reform is so radical that it compels a nation to start with a *tabula rasa*, an absolutely clean slate. A reform is generally a revolt against the *status quo* and an attempt at counteracting contemporaneous concepts and practices. In the terminology of the famous German philosopher Hegel one might say that it is an antithesis that springs out of the inevitable inner contradictions of a thesis, but the thesis or the previous state is not completely annihilated; it acts along with its

antithesis to create a new synthesis. This is a general law of life and the progressive realisation of its values. This law is recognised by the Qur'an when it says, `Whatever communication We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it' (ii. 106). Good and evil are absolute but their historical manifestations are changing and relative. According to the Qur'an, only God and the moral law are absolute and faith in them is the quintessence of all Truth and all religion. All else is relative. Creeds that cannot distinguish between the relative and the absolute become outworn when they have lived out their utilities. The Qur'an holds that the laws and customs, conventions and ritual of nations are changing and relative, determined and dictated by changing circumstances. The Qur'an says, `Everything is perishable but He' (xxvii. 88). In order to survive spiritually, man must hitch his wagon to the immutable absolute which should become the law of all change. The eternal Islam that remained fundamentally the same from Adam to Muhammad could not be a system of laws and practices or modes of worship because all these elements varied from epoch to epoch. If the relative and the absolute, taken together in one indivisible whole, could be called a creed, then no creed could be eternally abiding. The glory of Islam is that it distinguished the universal from the changing particulars. The unity and universality of religion which is one of the basic concepts of Islam is also a guarantee of its eternal survival. It is this distinguishing feature of Islam which made the modern sage Bernard Shaw pronounce the verdict that fundamental Islam would be the religion of the future. Shaw is a mortal enemy of all orthodoxies and all systems of vested interests. As a creative evolutionsist, he believes in life eternally recreating itself but all the same he believes that Islam has an abiding value and a future. Naturally, he is not thinking of the orthodoxies that the Muslims have developed, in which certain dogmas and

attitudes have become fossilised and which, like all the pre-Islamic orthodoxies, have ceased to distinguish between the abiding and the changing aspects. Islam had a reference to the past, and a reference to the future. The Islam that can abide must be an outlook on life that could abide for all times, or, in other words, which should be above the vicissitudes of times. Even while chalking out a system of life it should not give a closed and sealed system incapable of progressive adaptations. It should leave the development of life open on every side. The road to infinite knowledge must be open; the road to the conquest of nature through understanding must be open; the way to the unity of humanity and to one world must be open. All gods must be dethroned to make way for the worship of the invisible, all-powerful Creator and Sustainer. All intermediaries between God and man must be brushed aside so that man may stand face to face with life eternal. Even a suprarational revelation or intuition must not be contrary to reason and to nature which manifests it. Henceforth man shall not worship man and no professionally religious priesthood shall be recognised. The universal brotherhood of man, transcending all castes and creeds and colours, must be striven after. Man must say Yes to life and embrace it with a life-embrace. All avenues of economic tyranny must be blocked and social justice restored. The more gifted in every line of life must be made to part with their surplus for the uplift of the less gifted. The diversity of humanity must be woven into a pattern of unity. Justice must be established between the master and the servant, between the employer and the employed, between man and woman. The weak must be protected against the tyranny of the strong. Freedom of worship and freedom of conscience which do not take unsocial forms must be protected. Instead of laying emphasis on the fall of man, the doctrine of the ascent of man must become an essential part of a living faith. The

ideal man in the Qur'an, is conceived to be a being before whom the visible and invisible powers of nature, i.e. the angels, must prostrate because of his superior knowledge which makes him God's vicegerent on earth. The Qur'an says that everything in the heavens and the earth is destined to be controlled by man on the condition that he is true to his real self and identifies his will with the universal will. Islam means the conquest of peace and happiness and the attainment of power through surrender. This surrender is not to be a surrender to any natural force or to any mundane power. His real self, according to the Qur'an, is a divine self because God breathed His own spirit into his clay. His nature is an implicit covenant with his Creator and the fulfilment of that eternal covenant is life eternal.

Man is a goal-seeking animal. His life becomes a failure when he sets up wrong goals before himself. Islam has set up a goal before man which he can approach eternally. God is the source as well as the goal of life and God is the name of eternal knowledge and eternal goodness. Knowledge and love are the ultimate values to which Islam reduces all the values which together constitute the good life. God is life and the fact of life at every stage is more life and higher life. Knowledge is symbolised as light, and God, says the Qur'an, is `the Light of the Heavens and the Earth' (xxiv. 5). This light becomes wisdom in the human being and `whoever is granted wisdom is granted an abundant good'. The love of God which creates and sustains all life becomes a source of all true knowledge and in this way knowledge and love, though conceptually distinguishable, have a common root. The Qur'an says, `Most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do the good' (ciii. 2). All success except in this direction is only an illusion which covers up an essential failure.

Islam started as a religion and created a state and finally became a culture. The religion was summed up in theism and virtuous life and the state was an instrument to protect and promote good life. Islam as a culture and civilisation incorporated into itself a good deal that humanity had already created through the millenniums and discarded that which would not fit into the framework of its ideals. As the momentum of the original ideas weakened, many un-Islamic ideas and ways of life also insinuated themselves into the lives of Muslim peoples. The simple democratic socialism of Islam received a setback when monarchical and feudal states were set up. The revolutionary movement of original Islam was assailed by many counter-revolutionary forces. But even with all these setbacks it remained the leader of humanity for about eight centuries. Having lighted the torch of modern civilisation the Muslim peoples, crushed by un-Islamic priesthood and autocratic monarchies, became listless and stagnant. Modern civilisation incorporated into itself many fragments of Islamic ideology. The last two centuries saw the rise of non-Islamic nations. The West rose in power because it discarded those outlooks on life which had hampered its growth for more than a millennium. Christianity was refined by rationalism and humanism. The power that applied science and capitalistic industrialism put in the hands of the West overcame very easily the degenerate political structure of the Muslim world. Muslims that had led the world remained backward everywhere. The missionaries and politicians started the fallacious propaganda that as Muslim peoples everywhere were stagnant so Islam, which is a common denominator of their culture, must be held responsible for their backwardness. These propagandists forgot the simple historical fact that Islam which they denounced as reactionary had made the Muslim peoples the vanguard of all progress. They attributed their own material

power and prosperity to Christianity, but how would they explain the fact that the Christian civilisation of more than a millennium created only the Dark Ages? Islam was identified by these propagandists with stereotyped and fossilised orthodoxies and degenerate political systems. This was really not Islam but a flagrant negation of it. Far from being outlived, Islam had never been fully lived. Even in its glorious epoch, it had compromised too much with un-Islamic ways of life. The West had advanced by moving to some extent on the road that had been pointed out by Islam. The West made knowledge free as Islam had made it free when it worked as a living force; it tried to democratise its governments, though it did not rise to that pitch of Islamic socialism in which the ruler chosen by the people was really the first servant of the state. Whatever wrong there is among the Islamic peoples is not due to the tenets of Islam but is a direct result of discarding its principles of progress and social justice; and whatever good was achieved by the rising nation was the product of essential Islamic principles.

The present world situation is that no nation is living a fully Islamic life. The Muslim world is only partially Muslim but so is the West partially Muslim. The world has yet to wait for a nation that would lead a fully Islamic life. Islam presents healthy and practicable ideals; it is not a mere Utopia, but ideals cannot be actualised in a final setting by any one nation or by any single epoch. Actual life of human societies could aim only at progressive realisation of those ideals. The first actualisation of those ideals in the initial epochs of Islam was also circumscribed by historical necessities. Progressive realisation would shape things differently from epoch to epoch in the light of the ideals to be attained.

The renaissance of the Muslim world would not be achieved by any blind imitation of the West nor can it be

achieved by sticking in details to systems of law that do not apply to changing conditions. Muslims shall have to rethink about the fundamentals of Islam. They should cease to suffer from that inferiority complex which tries to conform Islam to whatever the West brings forth. Islam has much to teach to the Muslim peoples as well as to the West. Islamic concepts of liberty, fraternity and equality are far more real and progressive if properly understood and applied. The social and political structures of the West are crumbling. Shall we take the pattern of the house that we want to build from the structures that are sagging because they violated eternal laws? The West built its power and prestige on nationalism and *laissez-faire* industrial capitalism which led to imperialistic exploitation and imperialistic wars. Its structure of a spurious democracy was shattered by fascism and communism. Shall we worship the state or racial and territorial nationalism putting patriotism in place of God? Shall we worship the dialectical materialism of the communists which makes life as a regimentation for production and distribution? Man is a worshipping animal; he creates gods and makes idols which he worships so long as they appear to grant him favours but shatters them when they do not serve his purposes. The materialistic West lost all faith in the true God of justice and humanity and installed other gods in His stead; but these wishful creations would give it no abiding satisfaction. These gods are impelling their votaries to invent world-destroying weapons that could wipe away entire humanity during a few hours. Life in these nations is becoming cramped, distorted and perverted. Nobody seems to know what life is meant for. Man is at war with himself, with others and with his entire environment. Shall we borrow any life-giving panacea from this vast asylum of violent lunatics? Shall we follow recipes of the physicians who have not been able to heal themselves?

The only way of regeneration of the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim world is to understand and put into practice those universal principles of life which are embodied in the Islamic outlook and try to fit their life into that framework of reason and justice which was divinely given to man. This book is an humble attempt at the elucidation of that ideology. It shall be based mostly on quotations from the Qur'an and the authentic sayings of the Prophet. The precepts and examples of the Prophet and those of his companions who imbibed his teaching would also be utilised. All sectarian controversial matter has been eschewed and Islam is presented in its broad basic principles. It is a philosophy as well as a way of life. Let the Muslims try to understand and apppreciate their own heritage before they are able to compare it with other philosophies and other schemes of life.

Chapter 1

OBSTACLES TO BELIEF

This book is intended to make the fundamentals of religion understandable and acceptable to a class of intelligentsia who, not having been brought up in religious tradition, doubt either the necessity or the rationality of religion; and it is few who have been trained to think philosophically about the ultimate problems either of morality or of existence in general. Our theologians have lost touch with the heritage handed down to us by great thinkers, some of whom were, at the same time, men of great religious experience. The theologians were considered to be the guardians of religious truth and specialists whose verdict must be accepted as a true exposition of religion, but the scientific advance during the last two centuries has left the theologians in the lurch; even the moral consciousness of the theologians had lagged behind the conscience of the *elite* of the age. The result of the progress of scientific rationalism was materialistic naturalism. Nature was studied in terms of mechanism and mathematics; there was no place in it for any will or purpose. During the course of evolution of religious consicousness, the multiplicity of gods of arbitrary wills was replaced with the idea of One Creator who was omnipotent and omniscient and this One God had a will and a purpose. But reality for naturalism had neither will nor purpose. There was no *ought* in it; there was only a *must* of purposeless mechanism; the laws of mass and energy produced their effects irrespective of any good or

evil; they were amoral and beyond good and evil. The scientific outlook with this worldview gripped almost all intellectuals of every nation, the uniformity of nature and its deterministic causation had no place for a Good God and a Directing Will. God was banished from the universe; He was not needed. Laplace took his book on astronomy to Napoleon in order to flatter the Emperor and get praise or prize for himself. Napoleon glanced through the book and remarked, 'How is it that I do not find the name of God in your book?' Laplace replied, 'Sire, He was not needed'. Laplace was not much wrong within the limits of mathematical physics or astronomy; to mix up theology with astronomy might vitiate both. It is a good precept: 'Take not the name of Lord thy God in vain'. To talk of divine dispensation and interference during the course of an experiment in a laboratory would tend to vitiate the experiment. Science deals with interphenomenal relations where, for the time being, it would be good if God is not interposed. For the scientific understanding of nature, God has often been the gapfiller of ignorance; He was the easy explanation of all happenings. The development of naturalism had to narrow down its sphere of work and its outlook for the purpose of concentration on phenomenal interrelations. For the scientific outlook only two vital factors were left: mechanistic nature, on the one hand, and scientific reasoning, on the other. This nature and this reason were the sole realities; they mirrored each other; nothing else existed and nothing else counted. Scientific reason was the only instrument to grasp truth; what could not be weighed and measured became non-existent. God and moral values were imponderables and so was the human mind itself. Consciousness which had discovered scientific truths was itself banished from reality; it was neither a noumenon nor a phenomenon, but was called an epiphenomenon, an ineffectual by-product of the

mechanistic causation of the brain cells. Life and mind must be explained away in terms of matter, which was assumed to be the Ultimate Reality.

The scientific outlook, in spite of its narrowness and one-sidedness, did enormous service, not only in increasing man's knowledge of nature and control over it, but its overflow into other spheres of culture was also beneficial. From times immemorial the essential ideals of religion had got mixed up with pseudo-scientific, mythological and legendary explanations of the workings of nature. The fundamental intuition of man that all truth is one and interrelated led him to mix up things hopelessly; facts were intertwined and confused with values in a most distracting manner. A man who believed in religion was also expected to believe in all the myths about creation in which the religious truths had been wrapped. The revolt of the man of science against religion was mainly caused by the clash of his ascertained knowledge of nature with the myths of allegories in which he was expected to believe as literal truths about cosmological and historical facts. The service done by science to humanity consists partially in freeing the essentials of religion from pseudo-scientific myths. With the advance of science the relation between science and religion tends to be clarified and the issues become more and more distinct.

The science of every age builds up a philosophy on its top as a superstructure of overbeliefs. Mechanism and naturalism built up a metaphysics of denials. As nature was impersonal and scientific reason dealt with nature impersonally, therefore any personality in man or in the universe was an illusion. All nature is mathematical and, as there is no will in triangles and circles and their properties follow from them logically and not volitionally, therefore the will in man must be an illusion. All nature is deterministic,

governed by an inexorable necessity; free-will is an illusion. This is the philosophy of mechanism and naturalism.

Mechanistic naturalism was still in full swing when biology also began to develop. Vegetable and animal kingdoms were studied more closely with the precision of the scientific method. Revolutionary hypotheses were brought forward. The first shock of any great scientific discovery has always had the effect of dislodging man from his assumed privileged position in the universe. The first shock always makes him lose his balance and it takes some time before he is able to effect a reorientation; initially, he loses his bearings. This is what happened when the Ptolemaic astronomy was proved to be wrong by Copernicus and the heliocentric theory established itself by dislodging the geocentric theory. Man had always considered his abode, the earth, as the centre of the universe; the whole drama of creation revolved round his abode and himself; God was specially concerned with him and the history of the earth. The religious outlook was so intertwined with this view of the solar system and the heavenly bodies that the shaking of this astronomical hypothesis meant for many the utter destruction of religious belief. But after some time humanity always somehow regains its balance and even clergymen began to say, `What does it matter to the salvation of man, whether the earth goes round the sun or the sun goes round the earth? It is not an essential part of religious belief. Faith lies elsewhere and is secure from all astronomical hypotheses'. Similar to the repercussions of the Copernican astronomy, the reactions of the Darwinian hypothesis were disturbing to religious belief. The Darwinian hypothesis of the origin of species along with the discoveries of geology created a great stir in the religious belief of the West. The age of the world was not six thousand years and it was not made in six days and the species of plants and animals were not created with their

present structures which were the results of the countless ages of the struggle for existence, of chance variations and the survival of the fittest, where fitness only means brutal capacity to exterminate the opponents ruthlessly and to get adjusted to the environment somehow. Darwin himself made no direct attack upon religion but religious doubts sometimes disturbed him; it is related about him that the sight of the resplendent feathers of the peacock chilled his spine with the doubt whether all this beauty could really be explained away as the product of natural selection. But the hypothesis gripped the whole intellectual world. The geology and biology that had become integral parts of religious belief were lightly waived aside. Religious belief had again to be shifted to safer ground where it could not be attacked by this overwhelming evidence. Copernicus had destroyed the centrality of the earth and thereby disturbed man's privileged position; Darwin further destroyed man's dignity by making him a descendant of subhuman creatures and a little more favoured animal than the beasts. Mathematical astronomy and physics required no God and made man a helpless and deterministic part of nature. God was not required and man had no special importance. Evolutionistic biology presumed to explain plant and animal life with all its order and adaptation and beauty as a product of naturalistic forces that were beyond good and evil; there was no ordering cosmic consciousness; man, his morality and his values, to which he attached eternal and objective importance, were explained away as instruments in the ruthless struggle for existence. Between themselves, physics and biology seemed to have done away with religious belief and killed it for all time? But, is religion really destroyed once for all and has it now become honestly impossible for a rationalist and a scientific freethinker to believe in religion in any shape? We find, however, that religion is not destroyed and some of the most intellectual

men, thoroughly acquainted with the achievements of science and appreciating its genuine contribution, still sincerely believe in God with all the implications of such a belief. How that is possible will gradually become clear during the course of our exposition in this book.

It may be said in adverse criticism of religion that religion has been saving itself by constant retreat and rearguard action. It holds tenaciously to certain beliefs as essentials but when those beliefs become untenable through the advance of knowledge the ground is shifted and belief taken to a safer stronghold. But why accuse religion only of this constant shifting of the ground when something it held to be true has become untenable? Scientific method is considered to be the method of the discovery of truth *par excellence* and it is believed to be concerned with an objective reality. Has not the progress of science been from error to error or, if you please, from lesser truth to greater truth? Science started with myths and legends and superstitions; so did religion. The progress of humanity has been shedding untruths or mythological explanations from both. It is true that both have been retreating equally the advancing knowledge of man. Every advance in science characterises of former hypothesis as an illusion or a myth which explained certain phenomena to some extent for some time. Who can say that science even at present is completely free of myths and mysteries? With all the limitations of human knowledge and experience, the hypothesis of pure mechanical naturalism is now being gradually superseded. The great biologists say that life cannot be explained in terms of purposeless mechanism; it has a causation *sui generis*. Psychologists like William James came to the conclusion that mind is more than mere biological life; mental causation and the relation of body to mind cannot be explained in merely biological terms. This may be called

either the retreat of science or the advance of science; it all depends on how you view it.

Science was, for centuries, mixed up with superstition and magic, and wild speculation, more the product of the imagination of child-humanity than of observation, experiment and reason. Every epoch has done something to free it from these encumbering accretions. Now it is claimed that science has finally found its ultimate postulates; the scientific outlook and the scientific method are established once for all. After this there may be new discoveries and new orientations but the fundamental thesis of an ordered nature, amenable to the causal category and mathematical reasoning, would not change. An Einstein may alter the view of time and space and may replace Newtonian physics with some more satisfactory explanation; he may replace absolutism by relativity but even the law of relativity is a law subject to causation and mathematical reasoning and hence absolute, because it is the very nature of law to be absolute. Science would go on advancing indefinitely and as the infinity of nature is inexhaustible so will be the increasing discovery of its secrets. But the ultimate postulates of science are established once for all and it is not considered derogatory to science that its earlier theories are replaced by some more satisfactory explanations with the perpetual advance of observation and experiment.

Why should not religious advance be construed in the same manner? Science expresses a fundamental human need; so does religion. Science studies phenomenal facts and their interconnection and, as science, it need not step over the bounds that it has set to itself; religion is concerned with value-judgments. Science tells us how things happen and in what order; religion tells us the whence and why of these happenings. Science is concerned with only one value, the value of phenomenal truth, the discovery of laws and

uniformities. With other values it has no direct concern. Beauty or goodness or love and happiness are not its concern. Nor do absolute beginnings and absolute ends concern it. When it begins to speculate on absolute beginnings and ends, it steps into the domains of metaphysics or religion. For science, the Ultimate Reality behind phenomena must ever remain unknowable as demonstrated by Kant and Spencer; and, from the strictly scientific viewpoint, no such trespass into speculation is allowable. As a Persian poet has put it in a beautiful simile. `Nature is an old book whose title page and introductory leaves giving the purpose of the book and the name of the author have fallen away, and similarly the leaves at the end have dropped off'. You can read it only in the intervening pages and make guesses about its authorship, its purpose and the end of the theme. But it is in the nature of man to consider all reality as one and all knowledge as one; however, we may be compelled by our limitations to effect a division of labour and a watertight partition of spheres. Great scientists have always, somehow, not been able to resist the temptation to speculate on the ultimate problems of existence.

We have said that science has reached its ultimate postulates, but reaching them does not mean the end of inquiry. On the other hand, it is only a stable basis for all future advance and the voyage of discovery continues. Could we not say similarly that religion too has reached its ultimate postulates? Spiritual progress is indefinitely open to mankind but the fundamental basis of belief will not change.

This is the claim of Islam. Man reached the fundamental religious truth that One God exists and that He is creative, sustaining and loving, and human morality is a necessary corollary from this fundamental hypothesis which must develop into belief, knowledge, realisation and action.

All reality is one and is governed by an order which is at once rational and moral and preserver of all real values. The Qur'an gives this as a fundamental postulate. In whomsoever this belief has entered heart and soul and is not merely a confession by the tongue, he has attained to truth and well-being here and hereafter. 'Whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from the Lord, and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve' (ii. 112). There are a number of sayings of the Prophet which corroborate it. 'Show me a man who from his heart believes in God and I will guarantee salvation for him'. Such a man may not necessarily remain a sinless man all his life. There is a famous Hadith related by Abu Dhar, the saintly companion of the Prophet, that the Prophet said that if a man believes there is only One God to be worshipped he is saved and shall enter paradise. Abu Dhar thrice asked, 'Even if he has committed great sins'? The Prophet answered each time, 'Yes, even if he has committed great sins'. The Prophet, in all probability, meant that such a man may slip into sin now and then, but, his heart being in the right place and his outlook on life being true and sound, there is little chance of his becoming an habitual and hardened sinner. Islam teaches that religion reached its ultimate postulate when it taught humanity to worship one Good God, and man has to assimilate His attributes of goodness within human limitations. It is generally known that *La ilaha ill-Allah* and *Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* sum up the religion of Islam: there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet. But every Muslim knows that the essential belief is the belief in One God; the Prophet is a clarifier and practiser of that belief and not an end unto himself. He is a servant of God like all other prophets and like all good and believing men. Whoever believes in God also believes and reveres all the great and good men who have shown the path of

righteousness to man. No Muslim is a true Muslim who believes in one prophet and not in the other; and the test of true prophethood laid down by Islam is believing, preaching and practising the unity doctrine. Science has reached its ultimate postulate only recently, but, according to Islam, religion reached it long ago; with theism begins true religion and with theism it ends; and the One God was revealed long ago to every civilised nation. `And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them' (xxxv. 24). This is a doctrine of the fundamental unity of religion in its essentials. Different people have followed different laws and customs and adopted different modes of worship at different times but the belief in One God was the abiding element of truth. Whenever this truth faded from the minds of a people, they became ignorant and unjust, and social injustice and tyranny practised by them brought upon them the wrath of God. The wages of sin is death and nations that lose the vision of truth perish; vice begins to preponderate over good, ultimately leading to destruction.

When comparing science with religion, some people assert that science is universal, provable, demonstrable and its results exactly predictable, while about religion the world is divided into hostile groups. Truth must be universal while religions, as believed and practised by different groups, contradict one another. The Qur'an has dealt with this question repeatedly and given clear answers. It says that religion too is concerned with universal truth; there is only one religion and all the religions are sects of it; that one true religion is belief in the unity of all reality and belief in moral order or the essential difference of good and evil, the results of which appear both here and hereafter. In whatever creed Islam has found individuals living on this belief it has unstintedly given praise to them and promised them the highest rewards of good life. All religions have a tendency to become fossilised and hardened into orthodoxies claiming

monopoly of truth and salvation, barring the door of paradise to all others who do not profess certain doctrines or folow certain rituals, customs or conventions. Islam was aware of this tendency that dogmas are the living faith of the dead that have become the dead faith of the living. In order to warn humanity against this tendency, it defined the fundamentals of religion once for all; wherever they are found, truth and well-being are there. Among the communities with which Islam came into direct contact, the Jews and the Christians both claimed monopolies of truth and salvation; those who did not subscribe to their dogmas and doctrines or their mode of worship were destined for perdition.

Let me give a few quotations from the Qur'an to prove what Islam considers to be true and universal religion and how it repudiates all claims to monopoly.

> 'And they say: None shall enter paradise except he who is a Jew or a Christian. These are their vain desires. Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful. Yea! whoever submits himself entirely to God and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from the Lord, and there is no fear for him nor shall he grieve. And the Jews say, the Christians do not follow anything good, and the Christians say, the Jews do not follow anything good, while they recite the same Book; similar to them are the utterances of those who have no knowledge' (ii. 111-113).

God is not the monopoly of any particular people or creed. To Him belong all directions; the conventional or ritualistic turning of faces to this or that direction is relatively immaterial.

> 'And Allah's is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allah's

> Face. God is Ample-giving and Knowing' (ii.115).

According to the Qur'an, living a virtuous life or doing good to others is the chief aim in all religious beliefs and practices. Conventional differences are of little account except as customs and uniformities binding a particular group socially.

> 'And everyone has a direction to which he turns, but (the essential thing is) hasten to do good works; wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together; surely Allah has power over all things' (ii.148).

There is another verse in the Qur'an which not only gives the basis of a universal religion but mentions the followers of other creeds explicitly along with the Muslims as upholders of truth and deserving of the attainment of highest well-being, if they only conform to the fundamentals. It is a basis that would unite all the theists of the world who believe in a moral order and as a corollary, believe in survival and requital. It is again essentially theism and virtue.

> 'Surely those who believe (i.e. enter the fold of Islamic life) and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good; they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve' (ii. 62).

Islam is full of praises of other prophets and other scriptures and whenever it mentions an essential element of religion it says you will find it also in other scriptures. It calls other scriptures Light and Guidance in which essentials of religion are given. It enjoins on all Muslims to revere all prophets who have anywhere at any time preached the doctrine of One God and social Justice.

Islam accepts and responds to the demand of reality that all reality is one and, therefore, all truth should be one. It invites humanity to the fundamentals of one faith which has no sectarian elements and which makes all modes of worship as of secondary importance. There is no doubt that Islam organised society on a definite plan and created its own conventions; but it has the fullest appreciation of the life of those who somehow have stood outside that system but still have a hold on the essentials.

Chapter 2

NATURALISM AND SUPERNATURALISM

We must examine more closely the reasons of the weakening of religious belief in the East as well as the West. The East has been a cradle of all great religions and the lives of oriental nations are still presumed to be guided by religious beliefs. But this is a mistaken idea; we must not confuse religion with religiosity, narrow orthodoxy or superstition. Religious life, in all its genuineness, has always been rare; men usually are guided by mere instincts of biological self-preservation and follow in a utilitarian spirit the customs and the positive morality which they have received through social heredity. The common man believes in a customary manner, and ritualism and religious practices, in their outward observances, are the only staple food of his spiritual life. The forces of modern civilisation have weakened the religious belief of even the common man; the old customary order has been disturbed and no new order has yet taken its place. The stress and strain of modern life, developed after the Industrial Revolution, has tended to destroy man's time-honoured outlook on life and his values have undergone a catastrophic transformation. The old communal bonds are either destroyed or are in the course of rapid dissolution. Along with the communal nexus, the family bonds are also weakened. Those aspects of religion that were bound up with family and community life have gradually waned; modern civilisation has intensified the struggle for existence, and the prevalent code is: 'Everyone for himself and devil take the hindmost'.

Transformation of human life in all its aspects, as the result of these changes, is a vast and manysided subject with which it is not our purpose to deal in this book. This book is meant primarily for the rationalists who find it difficult to believe in the fundamentals of religious faith because of the naturalistic outlook developed by epochmaking advances made by science. The modern intellectual's faith in naturalism is firm and well established. When he is told that religion deals with the supernatural, his initial reaction is that of disbelief and disgust. For him all is nature and the supernatural belongs to the sphere of imagination and superstition. When he wants to understand religion within the bounds of naturalism and rationalism, the most he can get at and appreciate is the morality taught by all great relgious teachers, and he says that for him moralilty is enough. If religious belief were a prop for morality and social justice, he continues, he can believe in the latter and try to embody it in his life, without bothering about the supernatural props which are not needed by him and which do not exist.

But, is naturalism a sure and stable support even for commonsense morality? With the rise of science during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a wave of great optimism had spread over the West. The understanding and control of nature was convincing man that, with science and rationalism, most of the evils of life will be overcome and a scientifically ordered existence would usher in a millennium. The Golden Age did not lie in the past; it is to be achieved by science in the future. The illusion of the progress of morality also had taken hold of the minds of these optimists. Western Europe particularly had begun to scoff at the brutalities of the past and had deluded itself into the belief that morally too it had become more sensitive and refined. But the two great wars waged by economic imperialism and fanatical nationalism have made the

pendulum swing to the other extreme. The doctrine of the Darwinian struggle for existence and might, ultimately justifying itself as right, created philosophies of Racialism, Nazism, and Fascism. The great naturalist Nietzsche had set the ball rolling by his plea for the advent of the superman who will come into being by riding roughshod over all the previously accepted moral values and by utter repudiation of love and social justice. Power is the essence of life and power justifies itself. Love and mercy and justice and rights of the common man — liberty, fraternity and equality — are all disvalues that must be abandoned; they are the hallmarks of slave morality. Master morality must perform the revaluation of all these values in the interest of the superman who will be a law unto himself. The god who embodied all these values of love and mercy is dead. His superman, his Zarathustra, meeting the crowd was astounded at their ignorance that they had not yet heard that god was dead. This was naturalism developing logically as evolutionary biologism. On the other hand, physics and chemistry were busy devising the deadliest of weapons which could wipe away all humanity in the shortest possible time; all the naturalists in various spheres were competing for the quickest destruction of opponents. Religion used to be blamed for brutal fanaticism and it was claimed that if naturalism took its place with reason enthroned as God, all will be well with the world. All these optimistic dreams of inevitable progress were shattered by the two great Armageddons.

Religion was attacked by naturalism, ultimately to the great benefit of religion. The core of religion was separated from spectral half-beliefs, and pseudo-scientific beliefs which had incorporated themselves into the religious organism. Religion henceforth must stand on its own ground and cease to interfere with the explanations of facts of nature. Rationalism, in general, which developed

alongside with the development of science also did a lot of good in the various spheres of culture; even materialism benefited humanity by sweeping away a lot of ancient ... The human mind was freed to face nature alone and on its own terms. Science was no longer the handmaid of theology. Religions based on miracles ceased to appeal to the rational mind, nor could creeds based on mysteries or historical dramas, enacted centuries ago, form the basis of a belief in the abiding values of existence.

But naturalism itself, having accomplished its task, began to deteriorate from within. Its view of nature and human reason was too narrow and one-sided; so was its view of causation. What it called the law of causality was really the regularity of interphenomenal uniformities and these regularities differed from sphere to sphere of existence. The causation that worked in matter was transformed when matter was organised into life or life assimilated matter and changed it according to its own requirements. The mistake of naturalism lay in its limited and defective view of causation. Frantic attempts were made to explain the organism and its workings on mechanistic principles. It was said that the world of science was the sphere of applied mathematics and all biological processes must be reduced to mechanical and chemical terms. But the hypothesis was so untenable, so cramping and contrary to all observation of the laws of life that a revolt took place within the citadel of naturalism itself, and it was ultimately recognised that the organic could not be explained by the inorganic and the two belong to two different dimensions of being governed by their own distinctive categories of causation. A rift was thus introduced between biology and physics and the unity of scientific view of the world was broken up.

The intensive study of the human mind further revealed that mind was more than merely a biological instrument. Mechanistic physics had reduced the human mind to an epiphenomenon, an ineffective by-product of the working of the brain cells that were governed by the laws of physical action and reaction; the stimulus and the response were both mechanically determined. Biologically too, consciousness had no more significance than as help for the will to live. As it was gradually realised that the organic could not be explained in terms of the inorganic, similarly the fact slowly dawned upon human consciousness that mind was neither a passive spectator nor merely an instrument for the maintenance of bodily existence.

But, was it a gradual advance towards supernaturalism? The terms 'naturalism' and 'supernaturalism' are both vague and misleading, and it is a matter of paramount importance that they should be clearly defined before coming to any useful conclusion about their mutual relation. If by nature is meant the ordered existence of all that exists including matter, life, mind and any supramental life, if it exists, then it means the entirety of actual existence in all its grades including the Life Divine, if it is a reality. Taking this broad and comprehensive meaning, nothing could be beyond nature and the supernatural would be merely a negative concept having no reality corresponding to it. But naturalism, as developed during the last century, had a very narrow scope; it meant only materialistic or mechanistic naturalism for which matter and energy or something which was both matter and energy was the sole reality. For it only the measurable and ponderable was real. It was not science in general, but this kind of naturalism which was not a science but a metaphysics that militated against religion. Religion in general is based on the unseen as it is postulated in the very first lines of the Qur'an. The unseen is so for us and not for

God: for God the Seer all is seen. Narrow and stunted naturalism could not believe even in the existence of the mind whose intellectual construction it was, because the mind was unseen. Religion revolted against this naturalism for which all unseen was unreal, because the belief was suicidal for the mind itself. The view of nature, in order to be rational and tenable, must include all the grades of existence governed by various categories of causation.

If we want to retain the term 'supernatural' at all, we should define it like this. Nature has a graded existence, four grades of which are observed and experienced by us: matter, life, animal mind, and human mind. Life is supernatural for matter, animal mind is supernatural for life, and human mind is supernatural for all the grades below it. The laws of the lower do not apply to the higher, though the higher takes up into itself the lower, assimilates and transforms it to its own categories of causation. This is our realm of common experience and there is nothing irrational in the religious belief which extends the gradations of being still further and asks us to believe that nature is not exhausted in our experienced gradations; it extends from matter to God. And if the lower is taken up, transformed and transcended by the higher and not superseded and annihilated by the emergence of the higher, then entire nature must be somehow absorbed in the nature of God Who is immanent in it and also transcends it. In the sphere of the mind, time has a significance but space has no meaning, although, in the realm of matter, both time and space are the warp and woof of its existence. What prevents us from believing that there may be dimensions of existence where our time too is transcended? Even in our mental sphere we are cognizant of realities that are timeless, as the mathematicians believe that the axioms of mathematics are timelessly true.

This is the supernaturalism in which all true religions ask us to believe. This is also the belief in the Unseen. The supernaturalism which means arbitrary interference with the working of nature at a particular level is repudiated by Islam. Any extraordinary happening emanating from the spiritual powers of a specially gifted prophet or saint is nothing supernatural except in the sense that causation at a higher level has modified the effects of causation at a lower level of being.

In Islam we have this wider concept of nature. Physical nature is pointed out as a great Divine Manifestation and Islam firmly believes that the working of physical nature also shows enough signs of rationality, method and adaptation for goodness, to give a knowledge of God to those who ponder with pure reason, without any narrow prejudices or cramping hypotheses. Then it appeals to us to study the adaptations in the organic realm; 'the study of the anatomy of the camel alone is sufficient to convince one of the rationality of nature'. The Qur'an calls all nature the nature of God. As it is said about man 'the nature of Allah in which He made man' (xxx. 30). Then it says, 'In your own souls too there are Signs; why don't you see?' (li. 21). The stars moving in their orbits with measure and exactitude are also pointed out as Signs of God. The Qur'an calls itself a book of wisdom; it never asks us to believe without giving the rationale of that belief. We are asked to study the seen very carefully because this study would lead us to a belief in the nature of the unseen. The unseen is in a direct line with the seen and the law of gradation with gradually transcending causalities continues to work from matter to God. This is Islamic naturalism, which you may also call supernaturalism in the sense in which we have defined it.

Chapter 3

THE QUR'ANIC VIEW OF CAUSATION

The Qur'an says that God is the cause of all causes, and the ultimate cause of all existence. He is the being as the foundation of all becoming; He is the stable reality which creates and supports all change; 'He is the beginning and He is the end; He is the outer appearance and He is the inner reality' (lvii. 3). He is the phenomena and He is the noumena. He is immanent as well as transcendent. He is immanent in the universe by His power and reason and knowledge but He transcends the universe is that the universe in any phase at any one time and collectively in all phases at all times is only a limited and partial expression of His creative will. The universe and God are not completely identified as the artist is always more than his productions, though he is in a way immanent in any piece of art which is an objectified form of his inspiration. The relation of God's immanence to His transcendence can never be completely understood or visualised. The infinite and the eternal can never be expressed in spacial and temporal categories. There is nothing like Him either in things or in our mental and material categories.

The universe or nature is God's volitional creation because He is a creative will. Creation in time can never be completely understood because time itself is a created category, but the attribute of creativeness being an essential attribute of God, some sort of creation must be considered as coexistent with Him. The infinity of his attributes must create an infinity of worlds or universes; our material

universe, with all its immensities of time and space, may be only one of His creations. The universe, as we know it, may not be eternal.

The God of Islam being rational would never create any chaos nor did He find any chaos pre-existing as formless matter which He informed by His Will. It follows from the attribute of God as *Hakim*, the wise and rational, that whatever He creates must embody and manifest the quality of reason. Reason denotes order and purpose and truth. So the Qur'an reiterates the doctrine repeatedly that God created the world in truth and with a purpose and not in vain sport. The chief Qur'anic argument to prove the existence of God is the teleological argument from law and order in nature. Nature is a reign of law and not a product of capricious wills. The rational unity of nature follows from the rationality of its One Creator.

But, according to the Qur'anic conception of God and nature and their mutual relation, there is no necessary interphenomenal causation. No event in its own power is a sufficient cause of another event. In events which appear to be related as causes and effects what we can really know empirically without any unwarranted hypothesis is an habitual sequence. Even if we use the word 'causation' for necessary and uncontradicted sequences, we have to believe, according to the Qur'an, that the reality of all causation is the will of the Creator. Having created an orderly nature, God has not abdicated His will. Materialistic physics asserts that physical causation is blind and mechanical, and attempts are made to explain away even life and mind as processes of mechanical causation. The attempt is bound to fail as the organism and its purposive working could never be satisfactorily explained by the mechanical laws of matter and energy. Causation in the organism is now definitely separated from merely mechanical causation.

Organic creation and growth are goal-seeking processes. But all organic life works in the realm of matter. So in any organism we see two types of causation overlapping and working side by side but, as life stands higher in the scale of being than matter, material causation is subordinated to vital causation; mechanism is subordinated to purposive and goal-seeking activity. If sequences in material events were the result of absolute and inviolable causation, life in it could not exist. This means that causation from a superior stratum of being can alter and modify the working of causation on a lower level of existence.

Our normal experience manifests to us only three strata of existence: matter, life and mind. The types of causation in all the three strata are different and unique. The processes of consciousness are as different from merely vital processes of vegetable and animal organism as the vital processes are different from the processes of matter. As material causation is superseded by vital processes, so vital processes are subordinated to mental processes wherever mind has emerged in any grade. Human mind influences the working of the human body to an incalculable extent. The interaction of mind and body can never be understood in any terms or categories which apply to matter or organic life. In man we see all the three types of causation working side by side and acting and interacting on one another. Science is still grappling with the baffling problems that are created by the parallelism and interaction of three different types of causation in one entity. If we adopt the view that existence is graded with realms superimposed on one another, the higher modifying the working of the lower to fulfil a higher purpose, it offers us a universal law of existence. As to how the one acts on the other may never be explained by logical or theoretical reason but the difficulties of logic cannot stultify the obvious facts of life. The most

reasonable attitude is to establish facts and bow before them for the understanding of reality.

Now there may be other grades of being above the mind. The average man, including the scientist, has no experience of anything above the mind, but all great religions talk of the soul or the spirit above the mind. Men of mystical experiences of all epochs and of all nations, born and bred in different religious traditions and following different spiritual disciplines, are unanimous in their assertion that there are grades of existence above our psychological minds and every realm above the mind is governed by its own causation and by its own categories. As life cannot be comprehended by material categories and mind cannot be understood by the laws of organic processes, so the dimensions of being and consciousness above the normal conscious mind are governed by laws which cannot be subsumed under the causal categories of our conscious and logical mind which derives its data mostly from the senses. It would be sheer recalcitrance to waive aside the unanimous experiences of all the prophets and saints and others endowed with special faculties and lump them together as illusions or hallucinations. Some of these mystics like Ghazali were men of robust intellectual calibre, as much away from mere emotionalism as any sober logician or scientist. Ghazali says about supramental perception of a higher grade of reality that one who experiences it finds it more solidly real than the experience of senses or the conclusions of logic. It is not a state of mere feeling but a knowledge-imparting state, but the perception and knowledge of this state is not describable in sensible or logical categories. As the eye cannot hear and the ear cannot see, so the mind cannot apprehend what the supramental states of consciousness reveal. It could be described only by analogies which become very easily misleading.

Now, if there are realms above realms with different dimensions of being and consciousness, each governed by its own causation and each superimposed on the realm or realms below it modifying the working of the lower realms for the fulfilment of higher purposes, these ascending realms must ultimately culminate in God. At the level of divinity too there must be a special type of causation working through and modifying all the realms below; God must be acting as the cause of all causes. If life can modify the working of matter and mind can modify the working of life, why could not the superior realms modify the working of all the realms below for the fulfilment of higher or universal purposes? Nature is allowed to follow its sequences so long as life does not come on the scene to adapt it to its own purposes, and life proceeds causally according to its own distinctive laws so long as mind does not think it fit to subordinate it to its own ends and so on and on we ascend to God. He must have the will and the capacity to adapt His own ends whatever lies below Him. What is religiously called a miracle does not mean violation of the laws of nature. If the entirety of all grades of existence be called nature, then the word `supernatural' would become meaningless. No laws can be broken; but one law can interfere with the working of another law and the effect is modified accordingly.

Islam does not believe in miracles in the popular sense of the term as temporary suspension of the working of natural laws. It only extends to God what we see in our empirical grades of existence — the right to have a causation which could work, when necessary, on all the realms below. If He has endowed man with a limited free-will which works on life and matter for its own ends, He Himself, being infinitely free, could not be hampered by the different types of causation created by His own will. No creation can limit the Creator absolutely. When and how

natural working is modified is a matter of experience and valid evidence, but there is nothing inherently impossible in God constantly working in the life of all creatures when and how He wills.

According to the Qur'an, the entire creation is a realm of reason and order, but reason and order work differently at different levels of existence. 'And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure' (xv. 21). Chaos and chance have no place in His creation. If man were endowed with real insight, he would find no flaw in the universe; where he observes disorder he should know that he has not yet seen aright. Creation at every step is an ordered realm. Modes of causation change from realm to realm, but the reign of law is everywhere, however different the laws may be that work on different planes. God is the cause of all causes; causation in phenomenal existence is God-established sequence which can be modified only by the working of higher laws.

NATURE AND MIRACLES

From the view of causation thus elucidated we can appreciate the revolutionary step taken by Islam about determining the basis of religious belief. The popular mind in all religions based its beliefs mostly on the supernatural. It could not discover God in the normal and habitual working of nature. A prophet or a saint was supposed to have established his truth and genuineness by performing acts which violated the order of natural sequence and temporarily abrogated the law of causation. To the ignorant man it proved that he was a man of God who could successfully persuade God to perform a magical act. It was supposed that a man specially commissioned by God is neither born normally nor lives normally nor dies normally. The philosophers had developed the concept of a rational

order of the universe but the religious mind had been moving on a different path. It was a crude conception of divine arbitrariness and interference that appealed to the popular mind as a proof both of the existence of God and the truth of His messengers. The popular mind all over the world still bases its religious belief on miracles. The Qur'an repeatedly states what it was that people demanded from the prophets. They said that they would not believe in the truth of a revealed book unless they saw the angels coming down from the skies bringing the book with them. They wanted signs that should astound and overwhelm them. Whenever they want a supernatural sign, the Qur'an directs their attention to the natural phenomena. The Qur'an says, you want extraordinary signs but even if you are shown such signs they will not generate in you that type of belief which could really regenerate you. Those who cannot discern God in the workings of normal nature shall never be able to see Him in the abnormal. Similarly, Islam asserts that those who are spiritually blind in this world shall be blind also in the life hereafter. There is no scripture of any great religion in which observation of nature and its rational working are so emphatically and profusely recommended as proofs of the existence of God. Entire nature is presented as a great miracle. `And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure and in your own souls (too); will you not then see?' (li. 21). To those who are in doubt about resurrection, the Qur'an points out the phenomenon of quickening the earth after it is dead. `And He it is Who sends forth the winds bearing good news before His mercy, until, when they bring up a laden cloud, We drive it into a dead land, then bring forth with it fruits of all kinds; thus shall We bring forth the dead that you may be mindful' (vii. 57). Existence is a rhythm of life and death, an alternation of two states that potentially contain each other. Islam wants to remove from the human mind the fear of death and points out the

phenomena of nature which show that death is not the final state of annihilation. 'Surely Allah causes the grain and date-stone to germinate; He brings forth the living from the dead and He is the bringer forth of the dead from the living, that is Allah! How are you then turned away?' (vi. 96).

The Qur'an takes up the scientific and philosophical conception of nature as a rationally-ordered whole and wants to make it the pivotal point of its argument for the existence of God, the nature of existence and the place of man in nature. It wanted to draw away humanity from the supernatural to the natural as the way that leads to the understanding of life and God. When it points to material nature, it very often points to the order in the astronomical world. The phenomenon of vegetable growth is repeatedly referred to as a very obvious sign of the nature of life and how it is preserved in passing from state to state. The vegetable kingdom enjoys its own kind of immortality; animal immortality may be allied to it. Nature that preserves and revives organic life would not let man perish. Life having reached the state of mind where, besides the bodies, egoes or selves are generated may be trusted to preserve these selves even as individual egoes. The laws of preservation may be different at different stages of being. In the vegetable and the animal kingdom, it may be corporate survival or the survival of the species only as individuality has not yet emerged. With the emergence of the individual selves or egoes God as the life force may make the selves as selves survive the decay of the bodies with which they were associated. The creative force does the work for preservation and survival, but the mode of this preservation must be different at different stages of existence as the law of causation is different at different stages. The Qur'an's simple way of stating is that the Creator that created you out of nothing once is capable of continuing you in another

type of existence because the first creation has not exhausted Him.

In the Qur'an we find no appeal to the supernatural as a basis of belief. Man must outlive his demand for miracles and proceed from nature and reason to God. From the worms to the stars, he is asked to observe the course of nature and not in it reason as well as beneficence. Let him study the marvellous adaptations of life and the rationale in the working of nature everywhere. The Qur'an says that even the study of anatomy of the camel and its wonderful adaptations to its surroundings will lead man to belief in a rational and good God. This was surely a great step in the evolution of religious belief. Here, humanity has emerged out of its childhood and has come of age. Tolstoy, after his religious awakening, wrote, 'Popular Christian belief bases its religious convictions on the immaculate birth of Christ but to me every child that is born normally of parents is a sufficient miracle for believing in God'. This is exactly the Islamic attitude.

Nature, as we observe it, is only a fragment of the totality of existence, but Islam believes that we can legitimately draw valid conclusions from it pointing to the nature of the unseen. Inductive reasoning proceeds from the particulars to the general and deductive reasoning draws conclusions from self-evident premises. The Qur'an uses deductive as well as inductive reasoning. For those who consider the existence of God as self-evident, it draws conclusions about nature and man, about life here and hereafter. For those who do not already have this belief from other sources, it uses the inductive method of studying the particulars of the phenomena of nature and draws general conclusions from them about the existence and nature of the Creator. One can proceed from God to nature or from nature to God; whether we ascend or descend, it is

the same road. This is the meaning of the words of the Qu'ran that God is the beginning and God is the end; God is the outer appearance and God is the inner reality. We can start from God as the Creator and Originator, and proceed towards His creation to discover in it reason and goodness; God as the final cause then would be the ultimate explanation of everything; `To thy Lord does everything tend; He is the end'. If, on the other hand, we start with the study of creation, we find the power and goodness of God immanent in it.

Islam is the first great religion which has laid such a great emphasis on nature so that rational humanity may start seeking Him here first. Besides external nature, it turns man's attention to his own nature as well. 'It is in your own souls too; why do not you see it?' (li. 21). Having laid such a great emphasis on the study of nature within and nature without, it sums up its teaching in one place by asserting that Islam is identical with nature. 'Then set your face upright for religion in the right state — the nature of Allah in which He has made men, there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know' (xxx. 30). Not only the study of nature is prescribed for understanding the ways of God but it is said that as nature is truth, right religion must be identified with it. Some people talk of the conflict of science and religion, science representing the study of nature and religion dealing with supernatural realities. Islam resolves that conflict by identifying itself with nature. How can a religion which prescribes the close study of nature, in order to discover the rationale of it, conflict with science? Here is a complete identification of reason, nature and the will of God, and right religion is defined as belief in this identification. If religion becomes perverted and science becomes narrow, then naturally they would be at loggerheads. But when science means discovering the uniformities and unity of

existence, and religion also means the discovering of the One among the many; they can walk hand in hand supplementing and supporting each other.

It was this ideology of Islam which made the Muslims great investigators of nature and appreciators of all philosophies which attempted to discover the meaning of life.

Chapter 4

ISLAMIC THEISM

THE UNSEEN

Belief in the unseen is the fundamental postualate of Islam and hence the very first line of the Qur'an lays it down as a condition precedent, as a *sine qua non* of Divine Guidance. The Qur'an affirms that no one can step on the path of truth and righteousness who does not accept this as a postulate. The question at once arises as to why one should be asked to accept postulates without proof. Whoever has studied logic or any science should not expect from religion what is not legitimately expected from science or mathematics in general. All science is a study of the seen on the basis of certain beliefs based on the unseen. The law of causation or the uniformity of nature is the fundamental axiom of all science. The scientist starts with the belief that there is a universe subject to a reign of law in every aspect and every detail. But the universe, as seen and experienced, is an infinitesimally small part of the totality of existence. How does a scientist assert about an infinite whole what he experiences only in a very finite part? Every scientist must believe that the unseen is immensely greater than the seen.

The unseen for science is of two kinds: (1) the immensity of the unexperienced phenomenal world; (2) the postulate of the universality and uniformity of causation which as a postulate is a matter of faith. Plato was a great protagonist of the theory that the phenomenal world, the seen, is based on the unseen. He averred that all physical

existence is based on numbers but the numbers and geometrical relations are based on the unseen. Nobody can ever see an ideal point or an ideal circle, but all actual points and lines and circles, as drawn in the spatial world, are imperfect imitations of their ideal prototypes. He held the same view about all the general and abstract ideas; they belong to the realm of the unseen but all perceptible reality participates in them. Nobody has ever seen absolute beauty, absolute truth or absolute justice, but they form the unseen foundations of all existence. Here we find the greatest leader of idealism and intellectualism putting forward the belief in the unseen as the basis of all intellectual apprehension and sensual perception.

It has become customary to compare and contrast religion with philosophy, on the one hand, and science, on the other, and to assert in a very shallow manner that religion compels you to believe in the unseen while science deals only with perceptible and verifiable realities, and philosophy deals with only logically demonstrable reasoning or specualtive thinking. We have seen above how all the three are constructed on the foundations of belief in the unseen. Reason itself is founded on the belief in the rationality of existence which is again a belief in the unseen because the rationality of the totality of existence could never become a perceptible or a demonstrable fact.

All philosophy starts in wonder and ends in wonder. So does all science and so does all religion. It is said that in the parentage of religion we find fear besides wonder. We might put hope as well as a third progenitor of religion. In the primitive stages of human evolution, hope and fear and the sense of mystery or wonder and the ideas about the unseen are vague and superstitious. In the evolution of knowledge as well as of religion they become more and more exalted, more and more deep and are progressively

purified. It is a false view of most of the genetic philosophies that the essentials of a phenomenon are to be traced in its earliest origin. Mathematics and science also had crude origins and progressed gradually by the method of trial and error until they reached a stage where they claimed to be superpersonal and objective. No one doubts the objectivity of science because of its earlier crude and superstitious beginnings. Astronomy developed out of astrology and chemistry out of alchemy. If one asserts that true religion, which Bacon says should be built upon the rock and not be tossed upon the waves of times, also emerges out of nature-worship and propitiation of tribal gods, why should it be considered as less true and less objective? The unseen of religion has been constantly contaminated with vague imaginings or vivid emotional visions as the unseen of the sciences is strewn thick with exploded theories. In its attempt to rationalise or visualise the unseen, science has proceeded from error to error but, in spite of this, faith in its objectivity is not shaken. Religion too has progressively purified, rationalised, and exalted its unseen, and errors of judgment or imagination have not shaken the belief in the objectivity of the unseen. Science would crumble if it gives up its belief in the unseen. Similarly, no religion would be possible without it. The functions of this belief in the unseen, in science and in religion, do not always coincide; religion demands a personal attitude towards it as a way of life and science wants a working hypothesis for the understanding of phenomenal existence.

It is claimed that science has now reached a stage in which its attitude towards the unseen is free from superstition. A similar claim is put forward by the Qur'an on behalf of religion. It repudiates all pretheistic conceptions of the unseen as based on vain desires, false imaginings and uncertain guesses. Purification of the idea of the unseen is

identical with the exaltation of the idea of a supreme being which is the source of all power, love and knowledge.

In many of the fundamental aspects of science and religion the test of truth may be similar. It is said that the truths of science are to be judged pragmatically and the benefits of it estimated in terms of human welfare. Theism, as presented by Islam, has been pragmatically tested and found that it works in knowledge as well as life. The developed unseen of science is based on the unity of existence; the idea works admirably in scientific advancement. Theism is also based on the belief in the ultimate unity of the source of all existence. It is said, science freed human beings from superstitious fears of imaginary gods and demons; so has the belief in a powerful, rational and loving God freed men from unreal fears. Epicurus wanted to abolish belief in gods to make men free from fear. Theism succeeds in this much more than epicureanism and materialism.

The progress of the spirit is from the seen to the unseen, from the outward to the inward, from appearance to reality. The perception of man starts with his body and the cognizance of external nature. For millenniums he defied the forces of nature, or it would be the same thing as to say that he humanised them; anthropomorphism was an inevitable necessity. Man found in external nature a replica of his own emotions and urges, though the forces of nature appeared to him to be more powerful than himself. When he tried to understand the nature of elemental forces, he saw his own biological self mirrored in them and the only way to deal with them was to propitiate them. For long, his gods were the images of his own desires. Then there came a stage when, besides deifying the forces of nature, he began to deify his heroes — men endowed with extraordinary powers. It was believed that such men possessed great

natural and supernatural forces. Great rulers and great conquerors were deified. Even when the idea of one Supreme Ruler and Creator of the world had emerged, some nations began to identify Him with some great spiritual heroes. This is the stage of incarnation. It was believed that the great being, the great source of existence, became completely embodied in such persons; they were revered and worshipped as visible gods. Man was still incapable of conceiving an unseen god; so even after having reached the idea of One God, man was not satisfied unless he could see Him in a tangible form. Buddha, Krishna, Rama and Christ were also taken to be God Almighty Himself who had condescended to become man for the benefit of humanity. Their oneness with the ultimate reality was taken to be so complete that it was believed as perfect identity. They possessed all the attributes of God. Instead of being taken as pure specimens of humanity and moral and spiritual models or teachers of truth, they were the Infinite God having put on temporarily the garb of finiteness. In Bhagwad Gita, Krishna is alleged to assert that `when religion becomes corrupt I assume the shape of a human being and descend to the world to bring it back to the pristine purity of truth.'

When Islam emerged on the stage of history, most of the civilised nations of the world were found in the grip of polytheism nad incarnationism. The greatest service that Islam rendered to humanity was the exaltation and purification of the concept of God. Islam strived to deliver humanity from a multiplicity of false gods, on the one hand, and from incarnationism on the other, to bring man back to the unseen God. `Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision' (vi. 103). He is the Creator Who is immanent in His creation but He also transcends all His creation. The fundamental relation of all creation and creatures to their creator is that of voluntary or involuntary

obedience. The highest and the purest of human beings are also creatures and the oneness of the creatures with the Creator is achieved by complete self-surrender which is the literal meaning of Islam. This self-surrender is found in all nature. According to Islam, the earth and the heavens and all that they contain are Muslims. The earth that is spread, the trees that grow, the rivers that flow, the birds that sing and the meanest worm that crawls — all glorify their Creator in a tongue that man does not understand. Their living according to the natures with which they are endowed is their worshipful self-surrender and their silent wordless prayer. All creation is the manifestation of God but God has no body. `Nothing is like Him' (xlii. 11). All similes applied to Him are imperfect. Nobody can comprehend Him completely in His essence. He is the nearest of the near and the beyond of the beyond. The universes embody His will without exhausting it. `Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth' (xxiv. 35). But all light, as revealed to the imperfect organs of our sight, is a mere shadow as compared to His light. His light is self-luminous and non-spatial. His is the East and His is the West, but His light is neither eastern nor western. From the Great God everything springs and to Him it tends. He is the fountain of power and knowledge and love. He comprehends all creation by His power and His knowledge and 'My mercy encompasses everything' (vii. 156), and His `garden the extensiveness of which is as the extensiveness of the heavens and the earth' (lvii. 21) He manifests Himself as natural and moral order, as beauty, as conscience and as love. Islam forbids to have any images made of Him in any kind of material media although the mind cannot help making symbolical images of Him. All mental images of Him are to be taken as symbolical. He is the seeing and the hearing God but His sight and hearing are incomprehensible in their essence and reality. He is the ideal of all knowledge, all power and all

goodness but the ideal is never completely actualised. It is in this ideal sense that He is to be adored as the Great Unseen although He is the source of all that is seen. He always transcends all that is actualised. He is the Great Mathematician; everything that He manifests is measured and numbered, but He is not to be identified with numbers as the Pythagoreans did. According to Islam, His supreme manifestation is in the great and pure souls of His servants who offer Him willing and loving obedience — His prophets that He raised in every nation. All of them and the best of them are only relatively perfect in comparison with the rest of humanity but, when compared to God, their perfection is imperfect and their goodness is only a shadow of the goodness of God, as we find in the New Testament when someone called 'Christ good he replied, 'Not I but my Father in Heaven is good.' This is what Islam asserts about all the great prophets. None of them dare stand in his own right as Divinity. All experienced goodness is imperfect and hence not to be completely identified with God.

Belief in such an unseen God is a fundamental postulate of Islam. Islam wanted to lift man from the actual to the ideal and all that is ideal must by its nature always remain unseen. A completely comprehended God is no God and a completely actualised ideal is no ideal. This is what Plato meant by his Realm of Ideas which can never be an object of perception but must ever remain identified with pure reason; only reason could contemplate itself completely. But the God of Islam cannot be identified with logical reason; according to Islam, God is rational and our reason, when pure, participates in His reason, but His reason is not completely immanent in our logical reason which moves from premises to conclusions and from particulars to an hierarchy of gradually ascending universals. His reason could never be completely comprehensible to our reason and transcends it as much as His hearing and His

seeing transcend what with us is hearing and sight. In all our values and ideals, He is immanent but humanity is not. His sole interpreter nor any one human being can pretend to be His sole interpreter. He is the source of law according to which existence is manifested but His will is law unto itself. He creates what He wills and guides His creatures as He wills. His will, according to Islam, is not arbitrary but it is not exhausted by the laws according to which He makes and guides His creation.

The unseen God which Islam presents is meant to free human beings from the limitations of physical and biological existence. By making God the unseen source of all ideals, it makes human life evolutionary and dynamic. Man could never become the paragon of existenc, the crown of creation and the vicegerent of God on earth, unless he is delivered from the thraldom of the actual and lifted to the heights of the unseen ideal. So long as he is dominated and terrified by the real or imaginary forces of nature, he sinks even below the animals. As the Qur'an says, 'They are like animals, nay, in straying away from nature and truth, they are worse than the animals'. Polytheism, according to Islam, is worse than the worst of sins and most unforgivable for it not only insults God but degrades man to the lowest depths and abases him most abominably. Man, according to the Qur'an, is endowed with the best of mental and physical nature, but by his worship and fear of imaginary gods he sinks lower than the lowest. Islam is jealous not of the honour of God but of the dignity of man. He was destined to be the lord of creation working as a vicegerent of the Great Lord and he was endowed with faculties which would make all nature subservient to him, but this potential master has come to cower before those very powers that were meant to be his slaves. The monotheism of Islam is a belief with two facets: the purification of the idea of the infinite ideal, the Almighty

God, and restoration of the dignity of man. It is asserted by some ignorant materialists that religion created slave mentality in man. There is no doubt that all perverted religions make slaves of men in one way or another. But true religion is meant to make men free; it frees them from within and it frees them from without. It frees them from their own chaotic desires and inordinate passions and makes them lords in their own inner realms and it frees them from demoralising fears of imaginary gods.

When Islam says, 'And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him' (xvii. 23), the prohibition extends also to worship of man by man. No human being could in reality be the master of another human being far from being worshipped as God. Islam, therefore, directs its forces as much against incarnationism as polytheism. Believing in one God is of no avail if that one God could become a triple God by a curious logic or metaphysics, or if that one God is supposed to have a unique son co-eternal and coexistent, sharing perfectly in all His perfect attributes and capable of taking on human form and suffering humiliation and persecution to carry away on his shoulders the sins of humanity. The Qur'an says, 'Every soul is held in pledge only what it earns' (lxxiv. 38), and 'No bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another' (vi.164). The Lord of Judgment accepts no compensations and substitutes. In moral retribution there shall be no vicarious suffering.

The fallen man began to worship those very spiritual guides who presented themselves as only humble servants of God, with the result that the great unseen ideal was again degraded. The lower instinct of worshipping the seen in preference to the unseen overcomes misguided humanity over and over again. Islam has once for all made the clear and unequivocal announcement that, in the interest of his

spiritual advancement and emancipation and, in order to be restored back to his dignity of ruling over the entire creation in the name of the Creator, man shall not worship any human being, however great he may be in any respect, he must reserve his worship for the unseen God. By complete self-surrender to the unseen God he shall attain peace (*Islam* means both self-surrender and peace) and be 'free from all fear and all grief', because, having identified his will with the will of the Lord by complete self-surrender, he becomes free from all fear, and because all that is really valuable is preserved in the existence of the great preserver, why and for what should he grieve?

Advancement towards this ideal guarantees eternal progress in self-betterment because we are asked to strive to embody in our lives the attributes of God, which, being infinite, man could continue to progress eternally. The unseen God of infinite knowledge and power and love continues to work in the soul as an aspiration. Spiritual progress shall ever be an aspiration and never a complete fulfilment, because only the unseen God is eternally perfect.

Chapter 5

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Islam has laid the greatest emphasis on the unity of God. There is only one God. The world shows endless diversity, variety and multiplicity. Creation is manifold but the Creator is one. Apart from religious belief, we could arrive at the unity of the essence of existence by way of logic or by way of our experience of the world or our own souls. It is a postulate of science that we live in a universe and a multiverse. The remotest star in the heavens is related causally to the cold under our feet. As Carlyle has put it, the cooperation of the entire universe is involved in the growth of a single blade of grass. The flower in the crannied wall is so related to the universe, to God and to man that the poet is convinced that if he could know it all in all he would know what God and man are. This concept of the unity of existence is a fundamental postulate of science as well as of all true religion. The Qur'an has a simple argument about it: if there were more than one God, you would have seen discord or disruption in the universe or nothing could have existed with any stability and no laws could have worked. For science also, nature is unitary and uniform and all its immense diversity is threaded on the unities of laws and all these unities ultimately are derived from an all-embracing unity. In science all verified experience substantiates this hypothesis, but science is concerned with the explanation of the phenomenal world only. Religion begins where science ends. Religion asserts that the noumenal world is also a unity though the noumenal world is not presented to us as a

fact of sensible experience. Plato proceeded by way of logical reason to construct a pyramid of ideas. The diversity of the physical world is the infinitely broad base of the pyramid and the multiplicity of the ideas is reduced as we ascend higher and higher in the scale until we reach the apex where there is only one idea, the idea of ideas which he designates as the good, from which all other ideas are derived and through which the phenomenal world also exists by participation in these derived ideas. Philosophy arrives at the necessary postulate of the unity of reason. The physicist identifies the totality of existence with the phenomenal world and does not consider it justified to step beyond it. The Platonic philosopher identifies reality with reason and considers it impossible to step beyond reason because here the intellect has reached its climax. Reason must rest at this terminus; it cannot jump over its own shoulders. But for religion the unity of the universe and the unity of reason both point beyond themselves to an ultimate unity from which this dual unity of mind and matter emerges. The human mind, psychologically, is also a unity. Whatever be the nature of the mind or the soul, one fact is incontrovertible: it is essentially a unity of experience or apperception. According to Islam, all the worlds are linked by one law or one creative will because the Creator is one. Professor Hoffding, the learned historian of philosophy, says that in the West belief in monotheism has received great support from the advancement of science which is based on the unity of existence which it verifies at every step. The monism of science and the monotheism of religion come very close to each other. Man started with a multiplicity of gods indifferent or hostile to one another and ultimately reached the idea of one God. Explanation of natural phenomena also started with unrelated diversities until it reached the idea of a universe in which the remotest of

phenomena are ultimately subject to the same law and interlinked by causation.

Besides reason and the world, God also manifests Himself in the moral consciousness of man. Kant said that two things filled him with awe: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. In both these realms he tried to discover and affirm the unity and uniformity of law. He found it difficult to unite these two unities in a fundamental unity from which both of these emerged. He left it to the sphere of belief beyond knowledge, convinced of the essential limitations of sensible and intelligible knowledge, holding fast to his thesis that religion begins where philosophy ends. According to Islam, true religion is monotheistic and all the great prophets were monotheists. In the line of religious development of the Israelites, the Qur'an makes a special reference to Abraham who presented monotheism in a clear and emphatic form and the Prophet repeatedly asserted that he treaded the path of truth as treaded by Abraham who repudiated idol-worship and the worship of natural phenomena as gods. In Hinduism, too, we see a long and gradual development from polytheism and nature-worship to monotheism or spiritual monism, though a large body of Hindus could not step beyond incarnationism. Similar is the case with Christianity. Christ was a monotheist of the purest order and a number of true Christians always remained unitarians, but the doctrine of trinity vitiated the monotheism of Christianity, importing into it the error of incarnationism and postulating three coeternal and equal beings who are one and at the same time three. The assertion, being unintelligible, is designated as The Great Mystery. Islam sees neither the need nor the truth of this belief and the Qur'an repeatedly repudiates it. Zoroaster, too, was essentially a monotheist though the purity of his monotheism has been vitiated to some extent by the belief in two relatively independent and hostile

principles of light and darkness with Yazdan and Ahriman pitched against each other.

The case of Buddhism is slightly different. Buddhism is generally believed to be a godless religion. Buddha talked of the spiritual regeneration of mankind which could be achieved by understanding and following the moral law which for him was the law of mercy and negation of all selfish and physical desires. He repudiated the Hindu pantheon but preached neither for nor against the belief in one God. But his *nirvana,* though described in negative terms as a state in which all the pains and limitations of life and all its fears and griefs are eliminated, is an absolutely positive state of divinity, as is vouchsafed by the experience of great mystics of all ages and all creeds. The human soul could attain to a unity with that divinity though that unity is indescribable in any human categories for which unity and diversity are terms borrowed from the spatial and temporal world. We could safely take Buddha as a monotheist in the mystic sense, though the negative attitudes of Buddhistic philosophy towards life took an un-Islamic turn.

We cannot say what purification or clarification of the Buddhistic doctrines has taken place in recent times but so far as Hinduism is concerned one could safely assert, by studying the Hindu reformist movements from Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhi, that reformed Hinduism is becoming more and more monotheistic. Swami Rama Tiratha, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda, Ramakrishna Parmahansa and a number of other moral and religious reformers are all monotheists of one complexion or another, some with a more personal and others with a more impersonal God, approaching from the side of philosophy or mysticism.

Islam never claimed to be the first teacher of monotheism. It asserts that this belief is as old as humanity and religious truth. Islam claims that all the great prophets

preached this fundamental truth and all the scriptures originally contained it in a pure form. But this belief was contaminated over and over again and prophets were raised among all nations to restore this very faith. The fundamental unity of all religions is one of the essential tenets of Islam. Great and true religions differed in their rituals and ceremonies and laws and customs which varied with varying circumstances, but belief in the unity of God was common to all and, according to the Qur'an, this belief along with a life of virtue constitutes the essence of true religion.

It appears to be a great proof of the truth of Islam and its great triumph that reformers and thinkers in all religions are busy either repudiating or explaining away all that ran counter to this great belief and digging out from their scriptures proofs of monotheism, claiming that that was originally their true religion; all the rest was concocted theologies and accretions.

The unity of God, considered by Islam as the basis of all true religion, does not stand alone merely as a metaphysical belief about reality. Its significance for life is deep and wide. As we have already mentioned, it is a belief where science meets religion, though science does not necessarily move forward towards one God, but rests with the unity of phenomenal and manifested existence. Scientific monism is not necessarily monotheism but is a great step towards it. By repudiating the belief in the multiplicity of independent gods with arbitrary wills creating and interfering with the phenomena of nature at every step, monotheism becomes a great ally of the scientific mode of explanation. From the unity of God follows as a corollary not only the unity of existence but unity of humanity as well. We have already said that the essential unity of all religions is a fundamental tenet of Islam; that too is a consequence of the unity of God. Islam derives another corollary from the

unity of God and that is the unity of humanity. The Qur'an has repeatedly asserted that all humanity is one and all human beings have been created from one being, and God breathed His own soul into Adam who in various places in the Qur'an is identified with humanity or the human species. Islam does not contemplate making humanity uniform in every respect. On the other hand, it asserts that linguistic and other differences in the modes of life in different nations are significant signs of God, but it is emphatic in the assertion that fundamentally all humanity is one and all nations should try to agree in fundamentals, the most essential of which is that there is only one God and all men and all creatures are His family. The brotherhood of man is a direct corollary from the unity of God. The unity of moral law too is a corollary from the unity of God. However nations may differ in their customs and modes of living, there must be one objective morality for all. Double standards of morality, one for one's own nation and another for the foreigners, should not be tolerated. Nietzsche talked of master-morality and slave-morality as some people differentiate between the masculine and the feminine moral codes. Islam emphatically lays down that as all humanity is one, its moral code also must be one. The unity of morality follows from the unity of humanity, and the unity of humanity follows from the unity of God.

In the delineation of the attributes of God, the quality of unity is the most emphasised in the Qur'an. This is a quality which is comparatively easy of apprehension. But, with respect to other attributes, a fundamental difficulty arises. How would the infinite be knowable by the finite mind; how could the absolute be comprehended by the relative? To know the world qualitatively and quantitatively, man is endowed with an organism with specific senses mainly devised to serve his biological ends. Even his reason is rooted in his senses and the demands of

his organism and serves as an extension to his senses; his reason too is an instrument in his struggle for existence and adaptation to his environment. His senses and his reason are finite and relative dealing with finite and relative situations. Man, with his great advancement in scientific and logical reasoning, cannot completely grasp the nature of an atom nor the growth of a blade of grass. Is it not then presumptuous for him to pretend to know the attributes of the ultimate source of all life and existence? Then there is another difficulty. The language of man is the language of the senses; ultimately all words have a sense reference. How could the qualities of God be described in human language — the God Who is neither in space nor in time nor could He become the object of our senses? For us, our highest values and our most ultimate concepts are limited by the nature of our minds and bodies. How could we get beyond our own personalities and their relations to life and existence? Shall we then despair of all knowledge of God or pretend to know Him as He is? Both these alternatives would destroy all true religion and land us either in utter moral and intellectual nihilism or degrade the idea of God by making Him a known God, a God Who would be less than the knower because the known is encompassed by the knower. Religion, therefore, could neither be based on the complete ignorance of God nor complete knowledge of Him. Like all ultimate truth, the knowledge of God too is paradoxical for human reason; it cannot be logically formulated nor psychologically comprehended. There is an element of agnosticism in all true religion and even in the deepest religious experience. The attempt to comprehend God by reason always ends in negations. As Spinoza said, all definition is limitation. All the great saints and prophets have admitted the incomprehensibility and ineffability of the divine essence. Knowledge, as we know it, is a subjective

relation; how could we have knowledge of that which is neither a subject nor an object nor their mutual relation?

We shall try to make clear the position of Islam in this respect. God is not entirely knowable in His essence but His reality lies in the direction of ultimate values. As the Qur'an says, 'His are the most excellent names' (lix, 24). As compared with the attributes of God, our values are finite approaches and symbols. A true symbol is one which can serve as a pointer to a reality. Man is compelled to talk in symbolical terms. We have first to divest God of all disvalue; this is what is meant in religious language as the glorification of God. Let us refrain from attributing to Him what we should hesitate in attributing to a perfect human being or to any perfect being. For us perfection is an unapproachable ideal but it is a necessary attribute of God. We have to believe in God as the creator and sustainer of all values although values for us must remain human values. Plato gives us three ultimate values: Truth, Beauty and Goodness. In his dialectic, he has tried to demonstrate that all that is valuable in human life and existence in general can be embraced by one or more of these values. Although in his classification goodness is one of the three ultimate values, he says the Highest Idea, the source of all other values, is The Good. In this respect Plato's dialectic is corroborated by the deepest religious consciousness. One might think that love and happiness or even power are also felt by human beings as intrinsic and ultimate values and they do not appear in the triad of Plato. But a little consideration would make it obvious that love cannot stand by itself and ideally it must be based on one or more of these three values, and happiness is a condition of the realisation of these values; it is a byproduct of this realisation. Love may also be comprehended in the value of goodness. Power too cannot stand alone in its own right; it

is valuable only when exercised in subordination to truth and goodness, or beauty.

Islam says: God is truth; He creates with truth and demands that His creatures live with truth. Then it is said, God is beautiful and loves beauty; He creates a thing and then makes it beautiful. As to goodness, the Qur'an is strewn with His attributes of goodness, variously described as Providence, as Mercy and Forgiveness, and as Love. According to the Qur'an, God's mercy covers everything and therefore one might say that for Islam too, as for Platonism, the highest value may be characterised as The Good. Religion can be saved from complete agnosticism only in the belief that our highest efforts in the realisation of these values are in tune with reality. God is the guarantee of the reality and objectivity of our highest values. Hoffding's great book on the philosophy of religion gives the essence of religious belief as the conservation of values. To me it appears that religious belief could not be characterised in better terms. It is quite possible to believe in Plato's three ultimate values, but to believe them to be subjective and human only without any absolute and cosmic existence. One may arrive at the position that they are real values for humanity, but there is no proof or guarantee that they are embedded in ultimate reality. This was the position adopted by Sophists in the time of Socrates and Plato. For religious belief these values, in their perfection, belong to the essential attributes of God and when a man moulds his life according to them he is participating in a limited way in the attributes of God. Religious belief consists in the conviction that these values, as suprapersonal and objectively real, are conserved in existence and in the being of God.

All religion becomes anthropomorphism and anthropopathism, i.e. conceiving of God in the analogy of the human form and conceiving of His feelings in the form

of human feelings, unless we adopt the thesis of Islam propounded in various places in the Qur'an that human terms applied to ultimate spiritual realities must always be conceived as symbols. Take for instance the most fundamental attribute of God from which all else must emerge, viz. the quality of being or existence. For us whatever exists exists either in space or in time or in both. But God is neither spatial nor temporal. He created time and space and, therefore, cannot be contained by them. All the questions arising out of God's infinity, if based on spatial or temporal categories, involve human reason in antinomies and, if pushed in any direction, must involve us in absurdities. And yet, religiously, we have to believe that God exists and He is infinite, but His existence and His infinity must be different from ours. Even the unity of God must be of a nature different from our mathematical and spatial unities. How creation emerges out of His will must also be a mystery to us because no creature, being an absolute creator, can comprehend the divine act of creation. Creation in time must be taken symbolically, as the Qur'an says that time with God is something quite different from our conception of it. As Rumi says, 'The real nature of the attributes of perfection can never be understood except by analogies and by the effects of those attributes in manifested existence'. We see the effects of God's love and goodness and conclude therefrom that God is loving and good, but the real nature of love in the being of God can never be grasped by us except in so far as analogies could help. But one should beware of taking symbols for realities because that would lead to anthropomorphism and idolatry.

We see that the Qur'an uses analogies and symobls in profusion but warns us at the same time that the descriptions are to be taken as symbols. Not only the attributes of God but the Day of Judgment and rewards and punishments are depicted in vivid metaphors and imagery

Human language must employ physical terms; supraphysical or supramental realities, dealing with modes of existence in which our categories do not hold, may have their own modes of experience and communication, but they are not open to us on our present plane of existence. As the poet Ghalib has well put it, 'When we talk of apprehension of Divine Realities we cannot help using the symbolism of the wine and the cup; we want to depict the feeling of the lover and use the word *dagger* to denote how he is smitten by it'. Symoblism, when it becomes vivid and rich, has a tendency to be taken as a substitute for reality. Therefore, the Qur'an warns us against this tendency by pointing in clear terms that they are analogies. About paradise it is said: 'A likeness of the garden which the righteous are promised: there flow beneath it rivers, its fruits are perpetual and its plentiness' (xiii. 35). And lest paradise be taken as a particular place, it is said that paradise is coextensive with the entire heavens and the earth. Similarly, having depicted God as seeing, hearing, speaking, grasping, controlling and being pleased or displeased, the Qur'an says, 'Vision comprehends Him not and He comprehends (all) vision' (vi. 103); 'Nothing is like a likeness of Him' (xlii. 11).

In the Muslim history of theology there has been only one sect with a limited number of followers at a particular period which believed literally that God was corporeal. They were called *Karramiya* (after the founder Muhammad Karram) or *Mujassima* from *Jism* meaning body, but the main body of Muslim theologians and mystics have always maintained that the nature of God's attributes as they exist in Him cannot be known. We have to argue from their effects to their causes which cannot be comprehended. This was the view of Abul Hasan Ash'ari, the leader of Sunni orthodox *'Ilm al-Kalam* of Rumi the great Sufi and of Shah Waliullah, the great philosophical theologian and practical Sufi. In mystic visions, sometimes

God is felt as if He had a physical attribute as the holy Prophet in a vision felt a touch of divine hands between his shoulders, but it is universally accepted that visions are symbolical and sensualise nonsensual realities.

Having now understood the viewpoint of Islam about the nature of divine attributes that they are infinite perfections of our highest and ultimate values and their essential nature in the divine being cannot be comprehended and that it is from their effects in general existence and in our own life that we get a partial knowledge of them, we will proceed to describe those attributes of God which are given by the Qur'an as His fundamental attributes from which His other attributes may be derived.

Chapter 6

THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

According to the Qur'an, the first and foremost attribute of God is *Rabb* which means provider, sustainer and cherisher. The word has no English equivalent and in some of the English translations it is translated as the Lord, which is a very poor and inadequate rendering. Perhaps, the word *Providence* comes very near to it. Raghib Isfahani, the famous lexicographist of the Qur'an, defines *Rabb* as 'fosterer of a thing, who develops it from one state into another until it attains completion'. It is an amplification of the mere idea of creation; mere creation does not necessarily connote any purpose. Schopenhauer conceived of perpetual creation as an act of a cosmic blind will, which is beyond good and evil and is purposeless. Then there may be creation in mere sport as some schools of Hindu philosophy call creation the sport of God, a concept which is refuted in the Qur'an in definite terms: 'And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them for sport' (xxi. 16) The word *Rabb* which combines in its significance the qualities of a sustainer, a cherisher and a fosterer gives us the purpose and the direction of the divine will to create. God does not create and leave the things to shift for themselves or to become the sport of chance. Life-force becomes the force of creative evolution when it is conceived as creating with a purpose and providing the means of development at every stage. The quality of being a *Rabb* makes God a dynamic divinity and not a static absolute. God becomes immanent in the universe as a creative and

evolutionary purpose. The essential qualities of all life is growth to attain an end; all life is goal-seeking. A living God, therefore, must manifest Himself as a sustainer and a developer. The Darwinian hypothesis of life makes it a product of chance variations and adaptations to the environment in a blind and ruthless struggle for existence where nature is presented as red in tooth and claw. The beautiful and rational adaptations of life, visible in ascending gradations from the amoeba to man, are presented as the products of blind forces. According to Islam, all life is teleological and behind all teleology is God Whose wisdom is manifested in the systems of stars and planets in the heavens whose mathematically exact motions are repeatedly given in the Qur'an as great signs of the existence of a rational God Whose powers are unlimited, but He manifests everything in an appointed measure to sustain a thing or to develop it towards a goal fixed by the nature of a thing. The growth of life out of dead-looking matter is pointed out in numerous places in the Qur'an as the greatest miracle and proof of the existence of God and as a proof also of survival and immortality. A God Who is essentially a creator and a sustainer cannot lightly see His creation destroyed. The life-force is not exhausted in the creation of an individual organism only once. God Who is characterised as *Rabb* cannot be adequately described by any symbol or analogy. He is more than a mere manufacturer of an article and is more than a mere master who demands service and obedience from a servant for his own convenience and who depends as much, if not more, on the servant than the servant depends on him; nor could the analogy of father be considered adequate because the relation of the father to the son is much too external, and some of the modern psychologists claim to have discovered some kind of veiled and subsconscious hostility in this relation. Perhaps the mother and her relation to the child would be a more

satisfactory symbol. The child develops in the womb of the mother and is literally a flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone and for a considerable period is an organic part of her own organism. Even after the child is born its sustenance is derived entirely from the mother for as long as it is suckled by her. The mother in this respect is to a much larger extent the creator, sustainer and fosterer of the child than the father. Some religions adopted the symbol of the fatherhood of God because in a patriarchal age all authority was vested in the father who was an absolute owner and dispenser of all the means of subsistence and had a power of life and death over all members of his family as he possessed and exercised this power over his slaves. As a matter of fact, therefore, the symbolism of father and son was almost equivalent to that of master and slave. To symbolise the relation of God to His creatures both symbols were inadequate though both were used for lack of anything better. As we have said, the symbol of motherhood of God would have been more satisfactory but a patriarchal civilisation could not have employed it. There is a *hadith* of the Prophet that, while sitting with some people, he asked them if they could imagine a mother throwing her child into the flames of a burning pile and they replied that it was impossible. The Prophet said, 'Then remember that God's love for His creatures is immensely greater than the love of the mother for her child'. This saying of the Prophet illustrates what I have said about the superiority of the symbol of motherhood. If all attributes as expressed in words are symbolical and one is constrained to use some symbol, then *Rabb* is far superior to *Ab*, the father. The power of the creator, the capacity of absolute sustainer and guide to perfection, the love of the mother, and the love and supporting care of the father are gathered together in the concept of a *Rabb*. The limitations of fatherhood and

masterhood and even motherhood are transcended in the quality of a *Rabb*.

The question arises whether the belief in God as *Rabb* is justified by our experience of existence. The fact that existence is a cosmos and not a chaos proves that existence is an ordered and rational whole and, as we have already mentioned, it is not a postulate of religion only but of science as well. Our empirical knowledge offers us a spectacle of construction as well as destruction; as a matter of fact, the two go hand in hand and the one is almost everywhere implied in the other. But our evolutionist philosophers assert that existence as a whole has an evolutionary trend; fitness survives and unfitness is gradually eliminated. The universe is sustained by inviolable laws which are knowable by reason and they could not have been knowable by reason if they were not themselves the manifestation of reason. The law of self-preservation also holds in the world of matter and in the realms of life and mind as well. It is said that matter preserves itself under all changes; nothing is utterly destroyed; all apparent destruction is only change of shape. There is a universal law of the conservation of energy; therefore the quality of *Rabb* as a preserver is witnessed in every atom. Out of the nebulae have gradually evolved suns and stars and planets and moons, ordered in orbits and systems and all their movements are calculable because everywhere there is the reign of law, the rule of number and measure. It is sometimes asserted by gross materialists that this law is mechanical and blind and, therefore, instead of pointing towards the existence of a rational and good God, it positively negates any such idea. But some of the scientists like Eddington and Jeans and Haldane, who have tried to construct philosophies on the basis of the findings of modern science, have reached the conclusion that they are driven to believe that the universe is created and sustained

by a great mathematical mind. Haldane, the great biologist, proceeds further and says that the world of facts is also based on the world of values and at least one great value of truth is the basis of all scientific knowledge; but beauty and goodness also are essential superpersonal and objective values and existence is rationally conceivable only in terms of an absolute personality. Everything that exists exists because it is sustained, and it is sustained not only by its own nature and its impulse of self-preservation but because everything else is so ordered that the universal order helps to sustain it. As Emerson has put it, the whole universe globes itself into a drop of dew or, as Carlyle has put it, the entire existence cooperates to make a blade of grass grow. Look at the conditions that make life possible. If any one of those conditions were absent, life would disappear. If several conditions were not provided in a definite measure, a thing would not exist or work. Is this infinite adaptation the product of blind mechanism? It is blindness itself not to see the laws that tend to these adaptations. Nietzsche, who could never step beyond nature to the all-wise and good God Who is the author and sustainer of it, said, 'There is more wisdom in the construction and operation of the body than in all the libraries of all the world'. In the Qur'an, among all the other arguments for the existence of God, the argument from teleology, the fulfilment of purposes and adaptations in nature stands out most prominently, although the Qur'an enjoins the observation of our own selves too. 'And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure and in your own souls too' (li.20-21); 'With Us there are stores of everything but We do not manifest them except in a definite measure' (xv. 21); 'Surely We have created everything according to a measure' (liv. 49). The Qur'an repeatedly asserts that entire existence is subservient and can be made subservient to human life. Not that everything is created for the sake of man but man and nature are so

constituted that everything that exists can be made to serve the purposes of human life, if man exercises rightly his prerogative of knowledge. To know nature is to conquer it. Matter and life are interdependent. In the phenomenal order, life emerges out of matter though matter does not create life; both life and matter are created by the will of God and, having a common origin, they are mutually adapted and interdependent. There is infinite wisdom in the life of an organism and there is infinite wisdom in its adaptation to the environment. If the environment were not already so constituted that it could serve the purposes of life, there would have been no life. Is it not Providence, then, that before life emerges matter is already so organised that it is capable of supporting life? The Darwinists exulted that they had ousted the Creator from the biological realm, by explaining away all purposiveness and all beauty as the product of a blind struggle for existence. They explained away development by the hypothesis of chance variations. But they forget that the importation of chance into causation was vitiating the very basis of all science. They also ignore the fact that the law of the survival of fitness points towards reason more than towards blind mechanism. Law is akin to reason, or it may be considered as its equivalent. From what physics called blind mechanism they advanced towards the law of the survival of the fittest. But the law of the survival of the fit may also be religiously construed. Why does life support the fit and eliminate the unfit. If life supports the advance towards fitness, how could this trend of life be derived from blind mechanism? Blind mechanism means that it is indifferent to all values; but life, according to Darwinism, could not be blind to all values because it values itself and values fitness in it and gives it a survival value. Darwin himself was not an atheist; towards the existence of God he had an agnostic attitude. But a biographer has reported him to have said that

whenever he saw the beauty of the feathers of a peacock a cold shiver ran down his spine with the doubt if this beauty could really be the product of chance variations and sexual selection only. Islam would accept the hypothesis of struggle for existence but denies that this struggle is blind. Accoridng to Islam, all resistance is a test for the fitness of existence. Destruction may be made a necessary step towards construction, but destruction is a means only and construction is the aim and the goal. All individual life is born and grows and decays. Decay is as much a law of all physical existence as growth. The Qur'an repeatedly points out, `Look then at the signs of Allah's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death' (xxx. 50). `He brings forth the living from the dead and He is bringer forth of the dead from the living' (vi. 95). And the whole cycle of life and death in its entirety is given as a sign pointing towards a *Rabb* who is essentially a preserver, fosterer and sustainer. This can only mean that during all this phenomenon of apparent death and destruction the essential values are always preserved; only that which proves worthless is destroyed. The doctrine of the survival of the fittest is not antagonistic to religion but forms a part of its essential teaching. `The wages of sin is death.' Unfitness, according to religion, is incapacity to participate in the essential and abiding values of life. Paradise is a survival of the fit and hell is a destruction of the unfit. The Darwinian concept of fitness is narrow and even scientifically untenable as compared with the struggle for existence and the survival of the fit as we find in religion.

It is unfortunate that those thinkers who were impressed by the Darwinian hypothesis laid more stress on the aspect of struggle in nature than on the aspect of coordination and cooperation and most wonderful adaptation to circumstances which we find in the maintenance and development of life. Why should the

creation of static and unchanging species be considered a greater sign of the power and providence of the Creator than evolutionary emergence of better and more developed species? If with changing circumstances new types, more fitted to live, come into being and the law of life is the preservation of suitable traits by heredity, it shows that God is not merely a creator but a creative evolutionist; creation and evolution beome identical. From this point of view God becomes not only a creator and preserver of values but an enhancer of values. Therefore, it is said in the Qur'an that God is an enhancer, knower and conscious developer. This follows from His quality of being a *Rabb*.

We have hitherto confined our attention to physical adaptations of biological life and tried to show that the conditions of life and its provisions at every step cannot be conceived as products of chance and point to the existence of a wise and beneficent Providence. We now turn to another aspect of Providence which the Qur'an calls *Hidayat* or guidance. It means that things or creatures are not left to shift for themselves to grope their way blindly until they accidentally stumble into a suitable mode of existence. The law of guidance is also a universal law and it operates in all realms from matter to mind. We have already pointed out that it is not justifiable to call even the mechanism of matter as blind. All matter follows fixed laws or obeys the laws inherent in its nature. Even the realm of matter is not a realm of chance; it follows implicitly the destiny of its own nature. According to the Qur'an, every type of existence is a mode of life; matter also is living in its own way. Everything in the heavens and the earth submits to God and proclaims the glory of God in a tongue which we do not understand. Matter too is guided. From the atom to the star there are systems that are preordained. Who compels billions of atoms in a crystal to arrange themselves into beautiful geometrical figures? None of those apparently

unconscious atoms transgresses the limits prescribed for it. If the atoms do not consciously organise themselves, they are somehow guided. The Qur'an repeatedly turns our attention to the courses of the heavenly bodies; we are asked to ponder over the precision with whcih they move in their orbits. Islam says that it is the result of guidance from God and obedience on the part of the creature. All nature is perpetual submission to the will of God and is a continuous prayer. Every atom and every star is a Muslim. Islam, therefore, is not the creed of a particular group of humanity but is the religion of winds that blow and rivers that flow. The type of guidance and submission varies from creature to creature and from realm to realm. Matter is guided in one way and plant and animal life in another way, and mind is guided in a different manner. Matter is guided by what we understand as mathematical and mechanical laws, plant life is guided by the laws of growth, and animal life is guided by instinct. When man comes on the scene and mind emerges, we notice a transition from instinct to reason. Along with reason there emerges that most mysterious privilege and trial of man called freewill. With reason and freewill comes uncertainty. This new endowment is a gift as well as a peril. To man there are always two ways open and he can choose to follow any one of the alternatives. But the endowment of reason does not mean that divine guidance is now withdrawn from him. Reason, if applied properly, is itself the best of guides; misguided reason sinks below the instinctive level but properly guided reason raises him above the angels. About the misguided it is said in the Qur'an that they descend not to the animal level but sink below it because the animal following the God-given instincts is not misguided. Islam does not claim to be an ultrarational creed; it is one of its postulates that reason rightly exercised leads to the recognition of God. But man is not only pure reason; he is also a will which is a double-edged weapon; it can be

wielded to understand rightly the laws of nature and life and follow them in practice but it could also be used to violate the laws of truth and lead one to destruction. The Qur'an says that the ways of truth and falsehood and of virtue and vice are pointed out to man by his observation and experience and by his reason, and ultimately by revelation. Revelation which, according to the Qur'an, is a supreme source of guidance may be natural, instinctive or suprarational. Animal instinct too is called in the Qur'an guidance by revelation, as it is said, `And your Lord revealed to the bee saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees' (xvi. 68). The revelation granted to the prophets is a special gift which calrifies and justifies the ways of God to man; it is more than mere intellectual apprehension. Intellectual guidance was not enough for man; therefore the apprehension of divine realities was made possible to specially gifted individuals to strengthen their conviction by a direct apprehension in order that they may create conviction in others by their truthful and virtuous lives and by the power that is born of direct experience.

So we see, as there is a gradation of being, an hierarchy of creatures, so there is a gradation of guidance and all things and beings get the guidance necessary for them. The religion of every creature is the nature with which it is endowed and so long as it follows its own nature it is on the right path. Islam is called in the Qur'an nature with which God has endowed man; it is not based on miracles or incomprehensible mysteries. Islam is the nature of man rightly understood and voluntarily followed. Islam is not the name of a particular creed. All religion is one as the God of religion is one and that one religion is the religion of nature with which man is endowed. As the Prophet said,

'Every child is born bringing with it the Islamic nature*; it is the parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Zoroastrian. This is a direct and emphatic contradicton of the Christian doctrine of original sin. No nature created by God is sinful. Christian theology asserts that Adam sinned and the sin of Adam became an integral and inheritable endowment of human nature; every child is a born sinner; even good actions and pure lives cannot wash away that hereditary taint; nothing but belief in Christ's incarnation and vicarious suffering and death as the great ransom and atonement can avail; without this all souls will persih as damned as they were born damned. How could such a horrible doctrine be consistent with belief in a loving Providence is beyond comprehension. God first damned all humanity to the end of time ordaining ineradicable sin for countless children yet unborn and then conceiving as the only means of their salvation that His only son should suffer and be sacrificed to atone for the sins which neither he nor others had committed. Christian theology boasts of having presented God as love while other religions had presented Him as a hard and unforgiving task-master. But strange is the love of this God which first damns for uncomitted crimes and then manifests itself by damning one of the purest of human beings identified with God Himself by this strange theology. Such a doctrine cuts at the root of all true religion and makes life a very cruel bargain. Islam is untiring in the repudiation of this absurd belief which degrades both God and man and explodes the entire basis of the moral law. According to the moral law as expounded by Islam, there are neither vicarious rewards nor vicarious punishments. The moral burden of one soul cannot be carried by another.

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* According to the Qur'an this nature is the nature of Allah: 'The nature of Allah in which He has created man' (xxx. 30).

In the spiritual realm there is no ransom or atonement. Every soul is responsible only for its own deeds.

While every atom and plant and animal comes into being and lives according to its own nature, why should man, the paragon of creation and the crown of things, be born with a perverted nature? According to Islam, God's providence, mercy and love are manifested best in the best of men who submit implicitly to the guidance of God. There is no doubt that reason as well as freewill is capable of perversion and in a large number of cases they are perverted, but this perversion is not inherent which could be remedied only by belief in irrational doctrines. Men do commit mistakes and sins, but the worst of all also do good deeds. A forgiving God does not immediately punish us for every mistake and the Qur'an says that if God were such a ready punisher nothing would have been left alive on the face of the earth. Man's reason and revelation are the guidance granted to man and the ways of righteousness are always open to him. Guidance is there, if he only rightly reflects and knows his true self and his true nature. Neither his true self nor his true nature is fundamentally perverted. Guidance is a universal divine law and follows from God's nature as *Rabb*.

If we could draw out all the connotations of God as *Rabb*, sustainer, cherisher and fosterer, many other attributes separately mentioned in the Qur'an would follow as corollaries. But the important attributes which are implied in it are given separate names in the Qur'an for the purpose of emphasis and clarification. Such are the two important attributes often coupled together because they both signify two sides of the same quality. *Al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* are both derived from *Rahmat*, which like *Rabb* is difficult to translate in one word. Raghib defines it as tenderness requiring the exercise of beneficence, thus

comprising the idea of love and mercy. Both of them are of a measure denoting intensity of a quality. *Rahman* means a being in whom love, mercy and grace form an essential part of his essence, and *Rahim* signifies the constant manifestation and exercise of this quality. The two words may be understood as stating the static and dynamic aspect of the same quality, although, from another point of view, all attributes have reference to action. All attributes of the Creator must be creative; none of them could rest in itself statically. The Creator as *al-Rahman* creates out of love; all real love is active and creative and as *al-Rahim* He exercises that love in forgiveness and mercy when His creatures having done wrong turn to Him for forgiveness or He Himself saves them out of His abundant grace.

The attribute *al-Rahman,* as eternal creative love, is used for God only, sometimes as a proper name, but the attribute *Rahim,* as meaning merciful and forgiving, can be shared by human beings also. The Qur'an used this double attribute together and enjoins on the Muslims to use it repeatedly while beginning anything; it signifies that Islam conceives of God mainly and fundamentally as loving and beneficent. As already pointed out, the word *Rahmat,* from which both these words are derived, is untranslatable by any single English word. The meaning includes love, goodness, mercy, tenderness and grace. None of these words alone would do justice to its full connotation.

If one may ask the question as to why God creates and, having created, why He perpetually cherishes and fosters His creation, the answer is found in His quality of *Rahmat.* The Neo-Platonists said that God is light and the universe is an overflow from that infinite fountain; it is the effulgence of the eternal sun. The Qur'an too has used that simile in a most beautiful manner, but *Rahmat* is the oft-repeated attribute. For the Neo-Platonists this effulgence is

involuntary, because for them the source of all being is devoid of will, which is considered by them to be a creative quality. The God of Islam is a willing God; it is His will which is creative and the motive-force of that will is *Rahmat,* active love. God had been conceived by the philosophers either as impersonal reason or an ineffable absolute devoid of all qualities. Plato only, among the great ancient philosophers, having identified God with reason, called Him the Idea of ideas — for him ideas only being essentially real — also called Him the good, making the good as the reality of all existence, identifying all real existence with reason and goodness. If Plato be taken as a paragon of idealistic metaphysics, we may draw the conclusion that the highest intellectual apprehension of ultimate reality identified God with goodness. Similarly, in the spiritual development of the Israelites when we reach Christ, the stern Jehovah has become a loving God. When somebody called Christ good, he said, `Not I, but my Father in heaven is good'. The whole trend of the life and teaching of Christ is towards love and mercy. When the Qur'an praises the true Christians, it mentions the quality of love and mercy as their distinguishing feature. It was Christian theology which distorted and perverted this concept of love in the doctrine of original sin, vicarious suffering and atonement. True Christians who have more of spirituality and less of theology manifest the trait of love and mercy in their lives.

Islam has synthesised in itself the highest achievements both of Hebraism and Hellenism. The God of Islam is rational; He creates with reason and truth; creation is rational and, therefore, intelligible by reason: reason can easily and smoothly proceed from nature to God by close observation and correct reasoning. Science looks for only theoretical and mathematical reason in the universe, but religion proceeds further towards values of life which go

hand in hand with the rational working of nature. The Qur'an completely identifies reality with reason and reason with the good which is the *summum bonum* comprising all other values. The good is the genus and all other values are the species of it. Numerous quotations from the Qur'an would bear this out. `Say: To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To Allah; He has ordained mercy on Himself' (vi. 12); `My mercy encompasses everything' (vii. 156); `And if you count Allah's favours, you will not be able to number them; most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful' (xiv. 34). It is said about paradise that it is coextensive with the heavens and the earth. As the heavens and the earth comprise all creation, it means that the bounty of God is manifested in everything, for everything has come into being because of creative love. Then it is said in various places that His bounty and His beneficence are not confined to rewards for virtue only; they extend even to the sinners. `All do We aid — these as well as those — out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined' (xvii. 20); `And He put betwen you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect' (xxx. 21).

It is sometimes objected that a loving God could not be a God of retribution and punishment. This is a very superficial objection. In all true discipline, pain and punishment are not the results of angry vengeance but the instruments of rational love. Spoilt children are those who were never punished because the love of their parents was blind and destructive of the very objects of their love. The Qur'an is full of rewards of virtue and punishments of vice. The punishment of vice is a necessary part of the moral order, but the infliction of punishment and pain for their own sake would be utterly irrational. The graphic pictures of hell are as allegorical as the sensual imagery of the paradise. The fundamental truth meant to be emphasised is

the inevitability of the good consequences of virtue and the bad consequences of vice, both in this life and the life hereafter. The imagery belongs to the realm of imagination but the moral order is real. The human mind is so constituted that even for spiritual and moral truths we are compelled to use material and sensual imagery. Even the philosophers, who talk in terms of pure reason, and the mystics, who feel or perceive that spiritual realities are non-material, non-sensual, non-spatial and non-temporal, use material and sensual imagery profusely, because they cannot help it. The mind and the spirit have no language of their own; all language is borrowed from the senses.

We find in the Qur'an very significant statements about the nature and mode of punishment. It is said in various places that with God good and evil are very exactly weighed but God is not quick to punish. It is stated that if He were quick in requiting evil with evil, no living being would be left on earth. In a number of places whenever it is stated that God punishes severely, it is uttered in the same breath that He is very merciful and beneficent. On the face of it, it looks like a contradictory statement but if we ponder a little, we can understand that it only means that punishment is reformatory and the loving God punishes out of love.

Chapter 7

DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE AND DIVINE GOODNESS

If we want to put in a nutshell what Islamic theism means by God, we could say, it is omnipotence combined with goodness. Mere creative energy and *elan vital* would not make God; the creative energy must be consciously and purposefully directed towards goodness. The blind will of Schopenhauer, creating fitfully without rhyme or reason, is the opposite of theism. Empirically, we see order in the universe, but it may be a mechanical order, a product of the laws of mass and energy having no consciousness and no aim. Our unreflective experience presents great difficulties in the way of belief in God because of certain flaws in our concepts of omnipotence and goodness.

Let us try to understand what we rationally mean by omnipotence. It means God is all-powerful; He can do what He likes or wills; no power external to Himself can stand in His way. If such a power exists whose essential attribute is goodness, the problem of evil at once stares us in the face. There is cosmic evil as well as moral evil which has to be explained. In nature we see construction as well as destruction; there is life as well as death and decay; human life too is full of moral as well as physical evil. If God is omnipotent and good, why is evil in any shape allowed to exist? It is argued, 'If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the

creatures are not happy; therefore, God lacks either goodness or power or both'. The answer to this problem can be found only in a correct analysis of the idea of omnipotence. The Qur'an asserts that God has the power to do whatever He wills or pleases; there is nothing to counteract His will. Whenever He wishes to create anything 'He only says to it, "Be," and it is' (iii. 47). But the Qur'an also says that this will is subject to its own laws; it is a rational will. This imposes limits on omnipotence which are self-imposed by the nature of the Creator and by the necessities of creation. 'And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, but We do not send it down but in a known measure' (xv. 21). He acts according to prescribed uniformities. Without laws and uniformities there would neither be nature nor life. But the laws impose no limitation on the omnipotence of God; they are themselves expressions of rational power. There are possibilities and impossibilities inherent in the nature of thought as well as of things. A thing cannot *be* and *not be* at the same time; contradictory qualities cannot exist simultaneously in the same aspect of a thing at the same time. If number is one of the expressions of God's rationality, even God cannot make two and two five. It is true that everything is possible with God but *thinghood* denotes a possibility. An inherent contradiction is not a thing; therefore it is not possible even with God. If ommipotence means capacity to work without any laws or to make laws and violate them arbitrarily, Islam repudiates the idea of such an omnipotence. Nature is a system of uniformities, and reason has its own possibilities and impossibilities. The God of nature and reason is not a blind or an arbitrary will. God creates what He wills but His will is purposeful, and whatever He creates exhibits a *rationale;* creation is the objectification of Logos. The intrinsically impossible and self-contradictory cannot be brought into being by omnipotence. There may be

happenings that are not easily understood by known laws, but there may also be one type of causation modifying the effects of another type of causation. This is the view that we must take of happenings called miracles. They are not the results of a violation of the laws of causation in general, but modifications of effects by the working of another system of laws. Working according to laws is the essence of rationality and if rationality is good we cannot object to the implacability and inexorableness of the laws of nature. If a saint or a prophet is sitting under a crumbling roof or wall, it might fall on his head, the laws of gravitation paying no heed to his piety, and a sinner knowing the structure to be dangerous may save himself by keeping away from it. Superficial religiosity would say that God should have saved the saint and let the sinner be crushed. This means that God Who created a system of nature should disregard and violate its working in the interest of individuals in their manifold situations. In that case nature would cease to be nature; it would be reduced to a chaos of arbitrary will. Who would consider such a God to be omnipotent and good or rational who could either not create a system or having created it would interfere with it at every step to suit the conveniences or whims of His innumerable creatures? Rationality means a system. An omnipotent being who is also rational can will only rationally. If he repudiates his rationality by his arbitrariness, he ceases to be a good and rational creator which is the Islamic conception of God. The Qur'an says that in nature there is no flaw or evil. It is only our desires and conveniences that attribute good or evil to the happenings of nature. Nature is a system of changes according to laws. Life and death are relative terms; they only denote changes in the form of being; God incessantly brings life out of death and death out of life and the whole process conserves the fit and does away with the unfit. It is dominated by the preservation of values and the survival of

the fittest. These variations are not chaotic and unplanned. Life proceeds from weakness to strength and, after having developed to a definite measure, it descends to weakness again. There are ascending curves of development and decay but during all these changes nothing essential is irretrievably lost because the whole is planned and directed by a knowing God. The ignorant unbeliever says that, if God is almighty and good, death and decay should not exist, but the Qur'an points towards these phenomena as proofs for the existence of a knowing and good Creator. `Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness, then He gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength; and He is the knowing, the powerful' (xxx. 54). After defining the phenomena of the rise and fall of life, it is very significant to mention two attributes of God: knowledge and power. It means that the whole process is consciously planned and serves a definite purpose which could not be contrary to knowledge and power. 'Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then makes it go along in the earth in springs, then brings forth therewith herbage of various sorts, then it withers so that you see it becoming yellow, then He makes it a thing crushed and broken into pieces? Most surely there is a reminder in this for the men of understanding' (xxxix. 21); 'We created everything, then ordained for it a measure' (xxv. 2); 'Our Lord is He Who gave to everything its creation, then guided it (to its goal)' (xx. 50).

So we see it is omnipotence which works according to a plan. The power to do everything does not include power to contradict its own nature. As this omnipotence is rational, it works for goodness because the rational includes the good as we find in Platonic philosophy. The real is the rational and the rational is the good. 'And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. We did not create them both but with the truth, but

most of them do not know' (xliv. 38, 39). Islam believes in rational omnipotence and rules out the idea of any will or power which is blind or arbitrary. Omnipotence of this type must necessarily be good; from such a point of view, there could be no flaw in nature. The working of nature is flawless; it is only our ignorance which sees change where it cannot discern the law and which calls that evil which does not suit its transient desire of convenience. 'Who created the seven heavens alike; you see no incongruity in the creation of the beneficent God; then look again, can you see any disorder?' (lxvii. 3). The Qur'an asserts that there is no natural or cosmic evil; nature is not a battlefield of Ahriman and Yazdan. The whole process is planned by an almighty and knowing power; it is good and tends towards goodness; death and decay are phases in the process of the fulfilment of a plan; only that is dispensed with which ceases to have value. God retains His ommipotence by promulgating laws and observing them. Islam denies the existence of cosmic evil; the problem arises out of ignorance or narrowness of vision; real insight into the working of nature would find no fault with it. So the question that if God is omnipotent why He allows evil to exist in nature is answered by the Qur'an by the denial of evil in nature. Nature works according to the universal laws which are no respecter of persons. These laws are rational and work for good. If sometimes their working does not suit our personal convenience, we call it evil. The problem of evil in nature is not raised by nature itself but by importing our narrow anthropomorphism and anthropopathism into nature. Our narrow human relativity and our human passions create a problem which is not raised by any contradiction in the nature of things themselves. Nature in general is a system of uniformities and nobody can deny that these uniformities, called the laws of nature, exist. But these uniformities cannot always work according to our desires or according to our limited and

contradictory wishes. The best attitude towards nature is the understanding of its workings and resignation to whatever it brings forth. The scientist has no quarrel with nature; he brings only loving understanding to meet it and is resigned to its workings. His only value-judgment is truth. This was the attitude of stoics to nature which they identified with cosmic reason or God. As Marcus Aurelius said; 'What is good for thee is good for me, O Universe'. The Prophet said, 'Don't vilify the *dahr* (universe, existence, time) because God says, "I am *dahr*". Islamic theism does not identify God with nature; God is immanent in it by His sustaining power and knowledge, but He also transcends it as the artist transcends his work of art, though he is also immanent in it because it is the objectification of his own creative will. If God is good, then nature too is good; only goodness can come out of goodness. In order to develop this attitude towards nature, we have to broaden our conception of goodness to cosmic dimensions; it is only then that nature will appear to be flawless. Any fragmentary standpoint would discover only blots and patches. The cosmic picture must be viewed by a comprehensive vision approaching the divine view of it. It is the faith of science that nature is subject to the law of causation, and, where we do not yet detect the law, it is due to our lack of knowledge. A wider knowledge would reveal the working of law. Islamic theism demands no greater faith so far as nature is concerned. Where we do not yet understand, we have not to vilify nature but to pray for more light and more light is granted by firmness of faith.

A number of Darwinian evolutionists presented the picture of nature as red in tooth and claw and as a ruthless struggle for survival. But the other side of their hypothesis was that nature produces more and more fitness, and the survival of the fit is the developing force in nature. Life is a movement from lesser to greater fitness; but, is any

construction possible without some kind of destruction? Transformation means passing away of one state and coming into being of another state. Those who want that a good God should have maintained and developed life without decay and death are demanding an impossibility. One cannot eat the cake and at the same time have it. Childhood may be sweet but in advancing towards youth it has to give way. In all development there seems to be an element of ruthlessness, but this ruthlessness is only apparent. The real thing is the developing of life-urge. The Darwinian evolutionist says that evolution disproves the existence of a good God, but Islamic theism considers the survival of the fit as a strong proof of the existence of a good God. There are many verses in the Qur'an clearly enunciating this essential feature of nature that it makes the fit survive and removes the unfit that is thrown up in the process of becoming. `He sends down water from the cloud, then water-courses flow (with water) according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it: thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood; then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profit the people, it tarries in the earth' (xiii. 17). God the fosterer does not bring into being things which stay out in one state; life is a development from stage to stage; the lesser has to be replaced by the greater and the lower by the higher. The law of decay and death is another name of the law of change and development. Man starts life with material elements and then develops from stage to stage until he is gifted with senses and reason. `This is the knower of the unseen and the seen, the mighty, the merciful, who made good everything that He has created, and He began the creation of man from dust. Then He made his progeny of an extract of water held in light estimation. Then He made him complete and

breathed into him of His spirit, and made for you the ear and the eyes and hearts; little is it that you give thanks' (xxxii. 6-9). We see in these verses that power is joined with mercy, and omnipotence with goodness, in the process of creation and development. If the materialistic evolutionist asserts that life started with matter first manifesting itself in mud, the Qur'an, in a way, corroborates him but corrects him by saying that matter by itself is not the creator; it is itself created and is a phase in evolutionary creation. The Qur'an says about the heavens that they were in an early stage only a confused mass and later developed into distinct bodies and life became possible only with water. The heavens were originally only a nebular vapour, an incandescent smoke. While looking at nature and its course of evolution you may either emphasise the aspect of destruction or that of construction. That nature has always been busy with construction nobody can doubt about it, but construction always entailed destruction too; you cannot have the one without the other. But the survival of fitness and the stability of the well-adjusted is a pointer towards goodness which is the original and primeval creative urge. Islamic theism upholds the law of development and enunciates the principle that useless is taken away and the useful survives. Far from being a denial of God, it is a strong proof of the existence of a Creator who is good. The so-called evil of nature and its ruthlessness is the destruction of the unfit which is necessary for the advancement of life.

The question why there is evil in life becomes really tantamount to asking why there is life at all. Life is inconceivable without change and without resistance to be overcome. Struggle results from the overcoming of obstacles. If a flying bird were to resent the resistance of air which it has to overcome with great effort in order to fly, it does not know that it is the resistance of air which makes flight possible. Resistance is created by nature as a correlate

with wings designed to overcome it. Thegoodnessof God is manifested in the creation of both. What we call good and evil are the concave and convex sides of the same surface; you cannot have the one without the other.

THE MORAL EVIL

Having disposed of the question of evil in nature we come now to the evil in human life. By evil we mean pain and suffering and the destruction of values. For nature only the Creator is responsible and we have seen that He cannot be blamed for what he has created or for the methods He uses for its maintenance and development. In nature whatever is is right because other alternatives are not conceivable; nobody can suggest or imagine any improvement on the laws of nature.

But when we reach man the problem is lifted to another level because here human will supervenes on the working of nature. Evil, as conceived and felt by man, is of two kinds: (I) suffering caused by his own acts; (2) suffering caused by those happenings for which he could not be held responsible and which are out of his control.

Man is endowed with freewill. If he were merely a part of nature which is determined by fixed laws, he would not be different from matter and plants. This mysterious gift makes him different from the rest of creation and also makes him potentially the lord of it. How undetermined free-will emerges from deterministic nature ruled by necessity is not understandable by any scientific hypothesis. But it is such an undeniable fact that the very act of denying it asserts it beacuse the denier feels that he is not compelled to deny it but is denying it freely.

Entire human life is based on the assumption of free-will. Our sense of moral obligation, our approbation and disapprobation of our own acts or the actions of others, our

systems of law, our sanctions, our rewards and punishments are all based on this postulate of free-will. If we were the children of physical nature only, free-will would neither be possible nor intelligible. It is by free-will that we transcend nature and step into the realm of ends which is the realm of spirit. God is free and when He made us in His own image and breathed His own spirit into us, as the Qur'an teaches, He made us also free. But freedom is a double-edged weapon; it means the capacity of following either the right or the wrong path. The distinctive feature of man is that he can revolt even against his Creator. The first exercise of man's free-will against God is what is theologically described as the fall of Adam. His life as a human being really begins with that fall which was symptomatic of his exercise of free-will. If the granting of freedom to man is an act of a loving fosterer, then any evil that may result from it cannot be attributed to lack of goodness in the Creator. We could be perfectly good as automatons and move in our prescribed orbits with the precision and regularity of the planets or glorify the Lord like the angels who cannot disobey Him, but with his free-will man can rise above the angels or sink below the animals. If he chooses to sink below he animals, he suffers the consequences and God could not be held responsible for his suffering. The Qur'anic attitude towards human sufferings has two sides. There are sufferings that man brings on himself by wilful violation of the laws of well-being. Attaching suffering to wrong-doing proves the rationality and goodness of God. But what about undeserved suffering? Most highly moral and spiritual men suffer at the hands of vicious men as well as at the hands of nature. The theistic view about this kind of suffering is that souls can be purified and exalted only in the school of adversity and suffering. It brings out the noblest qualities of man and tests his character. Character can be built only by the overcoming of resistance. A Noble soul may suffer

either as a result of some wrong done by others or as a result of the workings of nature. In all cases the right attitude towards life would purify and strengthen a man's character. Our idea of the nobility of the soul is connected with sufferings of both kinds. Against undeserved suffering man can bring his qualities of patience and fortitude. If he proves his worth thereby, this undeserved suffering cannot be called an unmixed evil; it becomes an instrument of positive good. If God had attached pleasure to virtue and pain to vice in all cases, the human soul could not rise to the heights of nobility for which it is destined. If the wages of virtue were always paid in cash in terms of physical pleasure and the wages of sin always paid readily in physical pain, virtue would be reduced to a calculable hedonistic bargaining. If the accumulation of pleasures is not the sole aim of life, then suffering of both types is a potential good. The immoralities and cruelties of humanity are there to be resisted and overcome so that we may rise higher than merely natural beings. As Longfellow has aptly put it in his *Psalm of life:*

> Not enjoyment and not sorrow
> Is our destined end or way,
> But to act that each tomorrow
> Finds us farther than today.

The Prophet of Islam was asked as to who among men suffered the most, and he replied that the prophets suffered the most. Now, how is it that these prophets who suffered the most still retained the strongest faith in the goodness of God? An unbelieving man when he suffers in any way that he considers as undeserved brings a charge of irrationality against life; and a man of little faith has his faith shaken either in the omnipotence or the goodness of God. Belief in the twofold purpose of suffering as punishment for

the violation of law or as something to be combated with patience and fortitude and with the utmost striving to remove it by rightly directed effort, removes the suspicion from the mind that either there is no good God or if He exists He has no power over evil. This was the kind of rickety faith that J. S. Mill acquired by a faulty knowledge of life and a narrow logic. He said there is evidence of the existence of a God who is good and strives for goodness but He is not omnipotent or powerful enough to remove all evil.

Chapter 8

ISLAMIC VIEW OF RELIGION

What is the meaning of religion according to Islam? The answer to this question is facilitated for us by the word *Islam* itself. *Islam* means peace as well as submission. The purpose of life is to live it well; in other words, well-being. In the call to prescribed prayers at given times during the day and the night the *mu'adhdhin* cries: `Come towards prayers; come towards well-being.' The purpose of life is life itself lived in a manner that is progressively purified, edified, harmonised, enriched, strengthened and elevated. As Longfellow has beautifully put it, the purpose of life is not enjoyment or suffering but so to live it that each tomorrow finds us farther than today; self-betterment is the essential aim. Life is full of conflicts within and without. In every phase of it, it is a battlefield. The struggle of the good against the evil or of the evil against the good is an essential and inevitable fact of human existence in a much larger measure than it is of the creation below human kind. Life, in its phenomenal setting, offers harmonies as well as disharmonies, and the purpose of human existence and the object of all moral struggle is to overcome disharmonies either to mend or to end them. The craving for peace is inherent in human nature; hence every being naturally craves for *Islam* or peace. Peace, well-being and happiness are three different names of the same state.

The second meaning of the word *Islam*, i.e. self-surrender, is closely connected with its first meaning. It defines the attitude that has peace as its fruit. Now the

question arises: If we are asked to submit, to whom is this submission due? Islam says it is submission to God and then it defines God to Whom we have to submit. If the conception of God is narrow or false, then the attitude of submission, far from leading to well-being, would make life narrow and perverted. Every worshipper assumes the complexion of the object of his worship. The God we are asked to submit to is wise, rational and good and His chief trait is love and mercy. The submission to such a God implies, in attitude and in action, regulation of our lives. God, according to Islam, is not a dogma but an ideal and a regulative force of life. God is the guarantee of our highest values. When the Qur'an says that God created man so that he may worship Him — worship in its essential significance — it does not mean verbal praise and begging for benefits, but living in accordance with the will of God. Every right action is an act of worship. When we are true to ourselves and good to our families and to our neighbours, our life is worshipful because, in fulfilling the ideals of our own nature, we are submitting to the will of God as manifested in our own natures. If God is truth, the pursuit of all truth is an act of submission to God and hence an act of worship.

The attainment of peace or well-being necessitates, firstly, creation of harmony within our own selves. Man is endowed with a number of instincts and emotions which are the raw material of life and its driving forces. They are not evil-in-themselves, because a good God does not create evil. The Qur'an asserts that nothing has been created in vain. Human instincts, therefore, are not to be identified with the Devil. Man is not created in original sin inherited from his progenitor, Adam. He is born with the raw material of life and a free-will, and God shows him the alternatives of action. His free-will becomes sinful and devilish when any instinct in him becomes selfish and aggressive. All aggression in transgression of the limits prescribed by

reason which is the distinctive human faculty granted to man so that he may make his instincts work in subordination to it. Reason in man is the voice of God and submission to reason is submission to God. The only way to achieve internal peace, therefore, is by an act of submission. It is only when the instincts submit to reason that we achieve peace. Only life of reason and virtue can secure us the peace and happiness which is an intrinsic craving of our nature.

The man who thus becomes at peace with himself becomes at peace with his neighbours also, as Shakespeare has put it: 'To thine own self be true and it shall follow as the night the day that thou canst not be false to anyone else'. Only the man whose life is guided by reason and virtue is true to his real self. By submitting his desires to the authority of reason, he has not submitted himself to any external authority but to his own higher self; and his higher self is divine as, according to the Qur'an, God created Adam and then breathed into him His own spirit. Submission to God, therefore, according to Islam, is not submission to any external authority but to our own natures in which God has constituted us. The laws of virtue, called in the Qur'an 'the limits prescribed by God,' are the laws of our own well-being. 'Whoever does good, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it' (xli. 46). By the violation of a law, the law or the legislator does not suffer; it is the violator who incurs the penalty of violation. Christian theology presented the doctrines of original sin, vicarious punishment and a suffering God and joined on to it atonement by Christ as a remedy. The Qur'an emphatically repudiates all these dogmas and doctrines as being irrational and opposed to the fundamental moral order, on the one hand, and as being derogatory to God and man and to Christ himself on the other.

Man is so constituted that he must crave and strive for peace and he also desires to be free. Obedience to an ideal only can make man free. The wrongdoer believes that he is free to break a natural law and fancies that he has asserted his freedom when he has broken a law. But he fails to understand that in breaking the law he has really broken himself. Virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment. As Emerson has put it, `the thief steals only from himself'.

Religion then, according to Islam, is nothing more than this that a man should actively and effectively believe in God as the creator of a rational and moral order in the universe and in human life and as the origin and promulgator of laws which are the laws of the preservation of values and the maintenance and enrichment of well-being. It is his duty to discover this God within himself and within the universe in general. Islam believes that such a God truly exists and can be discovered by observation and by reason, both theoretical and practical. We benefit from nature by understanding and submitting to its laws. If we understand our moral and social nature, we shall also discover laws therein, submission to which will guarantee well-being for us. It is only in this sense that *Islam* means submission.

One might say that the scientist discovers the laws of nature without reference to God. So one might assert about the moral order and the laws of human well-being that morality too is possible without any direct reference to belief in God. Aren't there scientists and even moralists who are atheists? Islam would reply that they too are seeking God and following the laws of God without knowing it. It is a proof of truth and reality that they assert themselves even when you do not acknowledge their existence. If a man believes in the efficiency of virtue, for the attainment of harmony and peace and development, to that extent he

surely is living in truth. He is submitting to God without knowing it. If the scientist proceeds on the postulate that the universe is governed by law and reason and not by chaos and chance, he too has glimpsed the unity of God in His creation. His act of scientific research is an act of submission to God according to Islam, because it is repeated in hundreds of places in the Qur'an that the wise and good people are those who ponder over the rationality of creation. From the study of nature to belief in God, there is only one step and Islam says that no man's search is complete until he has reached God. Morality and all human values get a cosmic support in the theism of Islam. All truths pushed to their legitimate ends ultimately lead to God. Belief in God makes life real and earnest and gives it a secure foothold. If a man believes in truth and beauty and goodness, but does not believe in their objective and eternal reality, his belief and his life accordingly shall have no firm basis. The man in search for truth is really searching for God and the man striving for internal and external harmony is seeking for that peace which is the goal of all true religion. The only true religion, therefore, is the belief in omniscient and omnipotent goodness or belief in the conservation of values. The end is the ultimate attainment of harmony by living in tune with the universe and with the Being whose manifestation the universe is. Understanding the laws of God and submitting to them, thereby regulating, harmonising and elevating life, is the goal of life and all true and healthy religion. No other religion is true. Wherever this is found, God's truth and God's peace are there. Therefore the Qur'an says that whoever believes in God and directs his whole personality in submission towards Him has attained to truth. 'Such are the people who are freed from fear and grief'.

Religious life is the life of surrender — the surrender of the less real to the more real, of personal desires to

impersonal reason, of the valueless to the valuable, of the temporal to the eternal, and of the particular to the universal. Belief in God is the comprehension of the eternal and, as all true knowledge has a reference, direct or indirect, to action, all life will be guided and transformed by it. All knowledge is potential power and real knowledge of the rational and the good must mould life according to reason and love enlightened by reason. Surrender in this sense is the only means of the preservation and enhancement of life. *Islam* means only this belief and attitude; all else will follow from it. Whatever runs counter to it debases existence and annihilates it. Belief in God, therefore, is not a speculative guess or a mere hypothesis, nor could it be called a dogma. It is a question of life and death. Believe and live, or disbelieve and perish. The Qur'anic rage against polytheism or the worshipping of any other being or beings besides God is not the fight of one dogmatic creed against another or the preference of one metaphysical theory to another. The pursuit of truth or beauty or goodness is a pursuit of ultimately valid and superpersonal realities which are all essentially one.

When giving the fundamentals of faith, the Qur'an often couples with it the doing of good deeds. It means that the mere profession of faith in words or a vague intellectual apprehension is not enough. To use an old Greek distinction between knowledge and opinion, faith not resulting in good deeds would be mere opinion incapable of becoming a driving force in action. In the Qur'an we find a distinction created between a Muslim and a Mu'min. Muslim is one who has become a member of the Muslim brotherhood by professing the tenets of Islam and obeying its laws and conventions. Faith or belief is something more than this; it enters the heart and begins to mould life from within. External observance without internal conviction is of little value. Making belief in God as the core of religion, Islam

amplifies it by attaching to it some corollaries which must follow from it. If these corollaries cannnot be derived from this basic belief, then there is something deficient in the belief itself.

According to the Qur'an, the essential derivatives from belief in God are the following:

(1) If God exists, He must be nearer to us than anything else including our own selves. This nearness must become a matter of direct intuition and experience. It follows from this that prayer is a genuine and effective approach to Him. It is realisation of this nearness which is meant by the Qur'an promising the vision of God as a reward of leading a pure life. Realisation of contact with God must elevate us and cure all our ills because He is the source of light and life, which must flow into the soul of man which has opened its doors for receiving it. Prayer at its highest is the remembrance of God, which means fixing our gaze at the ideal of life and its highest values. The relation of God with man is not onesided; it is reciprocal. The call is heard and responded, though the mode of hearing and response may not be intelligible to us. All genuine prayer is not for material or individual benefits or for the fulfilment of our lower desires, but for guidance to the right path; it is an aspiration for more light. Those who believe in God must, therefore, believe in prayer because a non-responding, impersonal absolute is a product of metaphysics and has no place in religious life.

(2) Although the whole creation is full of the messages of God which, in the Qur'anic terminology, are called the 'signs' of God and, although reason in its purity is also a great guide, the Qur'an points out another mode of divine guidance which is called revelation granted to specially exalted souls. As reason supplements the senses, so revelation supports as well as supplements reason.

Reason understands but the man to whom revelation is granted directly perceives higher realities and the unseen becomes for him a matter of perception by faculties which are more developed in him than in others. As we have geniuses in all arts and sciences and all genuine advance is due to their special intuitions and perceptions, so there are spiritual geniuses whose powers tower much above the common multitude. If God exists and guidance is one of His essential traits, then He must create some gifted beings who should serve as guides towards Him. Spiritual life is improved and elevated more by example than by precept; humanity, therefore, stands in dire need of spiritual exemplars. Such spiritual exemplars are called prophets. Belief in prophets, therefore, follows as a corollary from belief in a good and guiding God.

(3) With the belief in prophethood, the Qur'an joins a belief in the unity of prophethood and the unity of religion. The Qur'an says that prophets have been raised among all peoples and the fundamental message of all the prophets was one, that people should believe in an omnipotent good God as the creator and the sustainer and be themselves good and just. He is the real master; they should acknowledge Him as the supreme lord and worship no other being. The Qur'an has repeated in brief the histories of a number of prophets, all of them delivering the same message. All great religions preach the same basic truths. The difference in the teachings of different prophets is a difference of rules and laws and customs due to different times and varying circumstances. The spirit and essence of revelation have been the same although the body and the garb have been changing. Belief in the prophethood of Muhammad includes belief in all the prophets upon whose revelations he set his seal. He sifted the essential from the inessential; he revered all the scriptures in so far as they had preserved the teaching of the unity of God and justice

towards men; he refused to accept as genuine anything that ran counter to this belief or was derogatory to God or man.

(4) In the realms of the unseen there are beings that serve the purposes of God. They are called angels. The exact nature of the angels and their mode of work can never become a matter of direct experience for the common man. The prophets and the saints see and feel that such agents are at work. All nature works through agencies that fulfil the purposes of the Lord. We see in nature innumerable agencies at work but, as we said in the beginning, it is an essential postulate of Islam that life as seen and experienced is not the whole of life; the unseen exists and is much greater than the seen. What wonder, then, if there are invisible beings both good and bad, that work for good or evil ! The agents for good are called the angels. In the prophetic experiences they are so much in evidence that the conviction about their reality and their functions becomes an integral part of such experiences.

(5) Belief in life after death also follows from belief in a creating and preserving God. Human life would be a mockery if it started with the body and ended with it. If human ego were transitory and evanescent, all its values would end in dust and smoke. If self-preservation is the law of all existence and nature shows such astounding and mysterious ways of preserving itself in all its changes from phase to phase and if the essential elements of nature abide in spite of incessant phenomenal mutability, the essentials of the human ego too must abide. It must somehow continue to preserve its identity in all its developments and retrogressions. All life evolves and nothing essential is destroyed. As already stated, belief in the conservation of values is the essence of all religous belief. The most valuable entity we know of is the human ego. The life of human ego is a drama of the struggle of good and evil. Whatever it

thinks or feels or does modifies its life either for the better or for the worse. As the Qur'an says, every good and every evil done by man is minutely calculated and exactly weighed. The balance of the spirit is very sensive. The constant changes in the soul are the automatic effects of the life that we live. Islam says that the life of the ego will continue even after the dissolution of the body and the ego will carry with it in other planes of existence the cumulative effects of all that it has lived. The law of rewards and punishments works constantly even in this life, though it may not always be obvious. In the life after death these effects will become more patent perhaps because the removal of the gross physical envelopment would make the soul's vision clearer: 'Now We have removed from thee thy veil, so thy sight is sharp this day' (1. 22) belief in life after death, belief in the moral order and the law of recompense or retribution follow one from the other. If a preserving God exists, life must be preserved to evolve into better and better existence, until all evil is eliminated and the soul's voluntary surrender becomes its natural state. The Prophet said that ultimately hell would be empty.

We see, thus, that, although the Qur'an gives as essential religious belief the belief in the good God only, the other articles of faith which it joins on to it follow logically from this belief. If a good God who is a *Rabb* exists, then the moral order too must be real. If the moral order is real, good and evil must produce their effects which we call rewards and punishments. Moral order would not be real if life is destroyed with the body. So there must be resurrection and a hereafter. There must be God's agencies for good called angels who are invisible for our normal physical senses but whose working becomes a matter of experience and perception to those gifted with superior spiritual vision. God must create exemplars called prophets who should lead mankind to Him by precept as well as

example. There should be no fundamental inconsistency in the teachings of these prophets because they are all inspired by the same God Who wants to impart to humanity the same fundamental truths. This gift must be granted to the whole of humanity. All great religions, therefore, must be fundamentally and essentially true. That in which they differ is either contingent and circumstantial or interpolatory. These are the essentials of all true religions and these are the essentials of Islam. The fundamental and true element in all religions preached by all prophets is called Islam. If God exists, then there could be no other true religion except this. This is the broadest and the most catholic faith; there is nothing sectarian or parochial about it. Although the Prophet of Islam brought into being a community with a prescribed discipline and regulated its life according to the principles of justice, he never considered those Godfearing and good men who had somehow not entered the fold of the faithful as deprived of salvation. Such a narrowing of God's grace never entered his mind. The Jewish community bitterly opposed him and left no stone unturned to nip Islam in the bud. They intrigued with the polytheists and contrived even to kill him. They had to be fought against with vigour and their power finally smashed to make incipient Islam safe, but the Prophet never ceased praising Moses and glorifying the Jewish scriptures as light and guidance. Good and believing men among the Jews receive their due meed of praise with an open heart. Similar is the attitude of Islam towards Christ and the Christians. Islam has the highest praise for Christ and it makes an attempt to remove from his name everything falsely attributed to him, considering the doctrine of sonship, original sin and atonement as theological perversions and accretions. It considers Christ as one of the purest of souls and one of the greatest of prophets. Belief in the prophethood of Christ is an essential article of faith with every Muslim. True Christians also

receive a sincere appreciation for their honesty and mercy and their love of God and devotion to Him, although monkish asceticism is discountenanced as a way of life or a correct approach to God. Although Islamic corollaries of faith, the discipline established by it and its enactments are recommended as a completely satisfying way of life, yet those who stand outside this scheme and follow other forms and regulations are not excluded from salvation if they have in them the fundamentals of faith. `Those who believe (or Muslims) and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from the Lord, and they shall be freed from fear and from grief' (ii. 62).

This is the clearest enunciation of the religion of humanity. In several places in the Qur'an, only belief in God and virtuous life are given as essentials for salvation. But, as demonstrated above, sometimes necessary corollaries like belief in the moral order and judgment are attached thereto. It is not the fundamentals of faith but theologies, orthodoxies and emphasis on the secondary aspects of creeds that divide humanity into mutually hostile camps becoming a source of intolerance and persecution. The Qur'an says that, so far as forms and conventions are concerned, different communities turn towards different directions, but these are not the absolute essentials; the essential thing is the doing of good deeds. When the Muslims are enjoined to turn their faces to the Ka'ba while offering ritual prayers, they are explicitly reminded that this does not necessarily constitute righteousness. 'God's is the East and God's is the West'; In whichsoever direction anyone turns his face, there is the presence of God'. There is no doubt that Islam, as propounded and practised by the Prophet, is not merely a belief but a system of life with its own organisational forms and enactments. But there is no rigidity in this system. In many ways it is an open system

with latitudes for adaptations to different circumstances and diverse needs. The Lord of the worlds knew that entire humanity would never follow any one system in all its details. It is repeated in the Qur'an that if God had willed He could have brought the whole of humanity within one religious fold, but He has not so willed. Diversity in religious practices shall continue to the end of time. The nations and communities of the world are, all the same, invited to agree in certain fundamentals for universal peace and goodwill. 'O followers of the Book ! come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords, besides Allah' (ii. 63). Islam, no doubt, has its own organisation of beliefs and practices which, with the passage of time, has hardened into a rigid orthodoxy, but whoever keeps in mind the Qur'anic fundamentals of faith can never allow himself to become narrow to the extent of denying the good in other religions or denying salvation to those who, though following other conventions, still have in them the basis of all true religion: belief in God and a life of virtue. This is the religion of humanity which can unite all nations. It is a religion without dogma and without mysteries. No superstitious beliefs and no law-breaking magical miracles are essential to support it. The way to all rational development is open. There is nothing in it which can ever conflict with the verified facts of science, nor does it contain anything which would shock the moral conscience of mankind. Its principles are firm and stable; their application only can vary with changing and developing life.

The non-religious moralist asks: Why should not morality, love of mankind or social justice be enough? Why join on to it the belief in God which is difficult to establish by reason and experience? To this Islam would reply that belief in God is true knowledge of reality. Man is a reality-

seeking being. If he is ignorant about the ultimate origins and ends of life, he is essentially blind, So far as reality is concerned, such a man is living in the dark. Truth is light and life, and ignorance is darkness and death. Without firm faith in God, man gets only flashes of truth. 'The lightning almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still' (ii. 20). Morality gets its justifications and a firm hold on life only by the belief that love and justice belong to the essence of existence and values are embedded in reality. Without this belief our virtues too become a shadow show and in the background remains the tragic sense that all is vanity and wishful thinking. Religion says that truth and virtue are not illusions based on wishful thinking nor are they merely pragmatic aids for biological existence or physical survival of the species. They are guarantees of survival but of a higher order. They are eternal verities.

Faith, in the broadest sense, includes all that is good in life. As the Prophet said, 'Faith has over sixty branches and modesty is a branch of faith' (Bukh. 2 : 3). In another Hadith we find: '*Iman* (faith) has over seventy branches the highest of which is the belief that nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah and the lowest of which is the removal from the way of that which might cause injury to any one.' 'One of you has no faith unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself' (Bukh. 2 : 7). Bukhari has collected a number of sayings of the Prophet wherein faith is simply defined as the doing of good deeds. When a man, therefore, either by dint of his own nature or by training or by beneficial social influences, becomes just and virtuous, he has in him a good part of the faith.

Belief in Islam is not a simple assent to a dogma; all beliefs have reference to action. Truth is that which works and for Islam all belief which has no reference to action is

spiritually valueless. Beliefs and ensuing actions form a coordinated whole. Good actions become a part of faith and, out of the numerous branches of faith, good deeds by themselves, even devoid of any metaphysical background, form a very substantial portion. A man who professes faith in God and the belief has entered the core of his being and he leads a virtuous life is a *Mu'min* or believer in the fullest sense. According to Islam, he is a complete man because he combines right knowledge with right actions. But sometimes mere professions of faith are divorced from good actions and, similarly, it happens sometimes that virtuous deeds in a man's life stand by themselves without a conscious and explicit belief in God. In both these cases, religion of the well-being of man is incomplete. Faith is tested by deeds. If it is merely a verbal profession or based on hearsay or an opinion and has not yet entered the heart of man, it snaps at the testing time when a man is required to exercise control over himself or make sacrifices for the cause in which he professed to believe.

It appears from numerous verses in the Qur'an that faith without deeds is meaningless. Its thesis is that true faith must issue in good deeds. If it does not issue in good deeds it is mere opinion or verbal profession. Truth leads towards good deeds and good deeds prepare a man for the reception of truth. There are few places in the Qur'an where faith is mentioned alone without coupling it with good deeds. 'Those who believe and do good deeds' is an oft-repeated expression. Good deeds are the test of faith and even standing by themselves, unenlightened yet by explicit knowledge, they have a value. The Qur'an talks of the weighing of deeds in the invisible, spiritual balance; it is good and evil deeds that are weighed and not this or that belief. The chief aim is that there should be a preponderance of good deeds over wrong actions. The belief in God confirms a man in his virtue and is a deep-rooted support,

but virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment. Wherever virtue is found, it is a part of faith, professed or unprofessed in specific terms, and wherever evil is done, it emerges from a practical lack of faith. Man is to be judged by what his practical attitudes towards life are and not merely by what he professes to believe. Morality forms a large part of faith in action, though it may not be enough and soul-satisfying without faith in the Creator and Preserver of all values.

PRAYER *

Prayer follows logically from the concept of God as the life and light of the universe. Everyone of us lives and moves and has his being in God; all that exists exists through Him. If life is not a fortuitous concourse of atoms consisting only of stresses and strains of mass and energy mechanically .formed and unformed by the laws of thermodynamics, if it has a goal and a purpose which has its source in reality, then the consciousness of that purpose is necessary in order to mould life according to it. Man is part of a whole and that whole is God. If the whole, as manifested in creation is an organic whole, the relation of the whole to the part differs essentially from that of the parts to the whole in a piece of matter. A limb or an organ is alive fulfilling its function so long as it is in vital coordination with the life of an organism. As we have a physical organism, in which the parts are organically related to the whole, so we have a moral and spiritual organism

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* For convenience sake, generally the English word *prayer* is used for the Arabic word *salat*, which should, strictly speaking, be distinguished from another Arabic word *du'a*. The latter is synonymous with *prayer* while *salat* denotes the prescribed form of Islamic worship with set rules for its performance at definite hours of the day and night. In this chapter and the next, the English word *prayer* is used indiscriminately, and almost always *salat* is meant by this word.

which is not so obvious and perceptible as the physical organism. The individual is organically related to human society; he derives his mental and moral life from this organism. An individual in his atomic and isolated individuality is an abstraction that has no concrete existence. The essential reality of the life of an individual is super-individual and super-personal. We are parts of several different types of wholes in the different aspects of our existence. We are, at the lowest, parts of the material universe and it is our duty to understand the nature of this whole and adjust our material lives in subjection to its laws. Similarly, we live on the biological plane and have to adjust ourselves to the laws of organic growth nutrition and assimilation, in order to live healthy physical lives. The reward of biological wisdom is physical health, the feeling of vitality and the joy of life which ensues from it. Every organ of the body living in unison with the whole organism is engaged constantly in the perpetual give-and-take of life. Similar are the laws of the social organism. The Qur'an says that all human beings are the multiplication of one soul and it follows from this that all humanity is one social organism. Sa'di the philosopher-poet has interpreted this Qur'anic teaching in these words: 'Human beings form one body and individuals are limbs and organs of it; when one part suffers, its painful effects must necessarily reach all other parts'. Realisation of the oneness of humanity is the highest of morality and is a necessary condition for the well-being of mankind.

Ascending higher up, we reach the idea of a spiritual organism whose life is God. We are parts of the material universe, parts of the biological world, and parts of the social organism which ultimately embraces the whole of humanity, but in our innermost selves we are parts of that spiritual organism which we call God, Who is the life of this organism. We as individuals derive our being and functions

from Him. Every organ by living in tune with this organism truly lives. Whenever there is anything wrong with any part of the body, the life of the whole organism rushes to its aid.

Prayer refers to the life of the spiritual organism which supports and imparts its life to individuals who endeavour to keep themselves in vital relation with the central creative urge. The branch which severs its connection with the tree begins to wither; so we, as spirits, begin to wither if we get disconnected from the tree of life which is God. Prayer is the realisation of our oneness with God. From this realisation we can derive real sustenance. God is a cherisher and nourisher, but He can cherish or nourish us only if we keep our vital connection with Him. The part which realises its oneness with the whole participates in the life of the whole. The results of this participation must become evident in every part of our being. Prayer is a mode in which the finite gets in touch with the infinite. When we read in the Qur'an that God infused His own spirit into us when He created us, it only means that the soul of the spiritual organism, i.e. the life of God, established an intimate and vital relation with every individual human being.

If we had led an unconscious existence, we could have existed in God as the embryo exists in the womb deriving its sustenance automatically, without any effort of will. But man is endowed with consciousness and free-will. He becomes sometimes unconscious of his origin and forgetful of the source from which alone he could derive spiritual sustenance. In order to live vitally and completely and perform his functions properly, he has to realise his connection with the universal spirit. Therefrom he gets light and life.

As religious ideas and religious attitudes vary from the lowest to the most exalted, so does the prayer of one

man differ from that of another. The type of prayer depends ultimately on the idea of the God to whom one prays. There are savages and barbarous human tribes whose fears and hopes are personified and deified and the imagination creates gods with various natural powers and attributes. As the Qur'an says, 'Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?' (xxv. 43). At this stage prayer gives only a spurious psychological satisfaction. Among some tribes, if a god, after repeated entreaties and offerings, does not seem to respond and grant the objects prayed for, he is dragged down with a rope round its neck and publicly disgraced. Even after man has reached the idea of one omnipotent and omniscient God Who hears and responds and is beneficent, a man with an undeveloped spiritual attitude prays for minor material benefits and wants God to change the course of nature for the transient and individual benefit of the worshipper. If God heard all such prayers, human life and existence in general would be reduced to utter chaos because personal human desires are neither consistent in themselves nor do they conform to the course of nature on whose uniformities all life is based. The Muslim, therefore, is taught to pray, not for what he considers to be right and desirable for his own self, but for guidance on the right and straight path that leads to the goal of well-being. The straight path is further defined as the path trodden by those who have been blessed. The test of the rightness of the path is that it leads to the goal and the goal, as defined by the Qur'an, is the goal of well-being or blessedness here and hereafter. Though man is not prevented from praying for many other things about the rightness of which he is convinced, the prescribed prayer that he is asked to repeat many times during the day and the night is only for guidance on the straight path. Who knows always with any certitude what is the right thing to pray for, because the value of human desires and purposes is very

uncertain? The Qur'an says, 'It may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you' (ii. 216). As Rumi says, 'God in His mercy does not hear the prayers which, if granted, would injure the man'.

There are believers as well as unbelievers who argue about the futility of prayers. There are those who believe in God but say that God would not alter or modify the course of nature in order to please an individual. All happenings are the results of natural causes, and the right way to attain an end is to have the knowledge of causes which could produce the desired effects and to act according to that knowledge. This view, which is correct within certain limits, errs in its view of causation. We have already discussed the subject of causation earlier in this book. For every sphere and grade of existence the type of causation changes. It is a matter of our common experience that material causation is modified when life acts on matter, and vital causation is modified when mind acts upon physical life. Causation at a lower plane is sometimes subject to the causes that work on a higher plane. This action and interaction of lower and higher causation is also subject to definite and universal laws that cover the relations of all types of causation. Therefore there stands nothing in the way of prayer being effective, if supramental powers could be brought into action by concentration on those powers and by seeking their aid to modify the working of something below, in the interest of the realisation of higher ideas which do not violate the causation below but make it serviceable for superior purposes. It would be futile to pray for the alteration of the course of nature or a change of weather simply because it would suit some of our transitory purposes. But if general human welfare and the realisation of a great purpose is desired, then the powers above may be expected to respond if a genuine spiritual effort is made.

The course of nature is not so rigidly and mechanically set that human will or wills higher than that are totally ineffective against its implacable necessity.

There is another class of religious men who think that an all-knowing, good God knows best as to what is good to bring about; therefore it is useless to remind Him or to persuade Him to do it. According to this view, prayer is unwarranted presumptuousness on the part of man to inform God of something which is desired and then to persuade Him to do it. But this objection is based on a misconception of the will of God and other wills, human and superhuman. Where a being is endowed with freedom of the will, it may be a rule of destiny itself that certain effects are conditional on the exercise of free-will in a particular direction. Human and superhuman spheres of existence are not subject to mechanical automatism. All great religious souls agree in the conviction of Tennyson that 'more things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of.' Belief in the necessity and efficacy of prayer is an essential part of Islam. It is one of the pillars on which the entire superstructure of all religious life is built. Prayer, if rightly offered, is bound to result in the enhancement of power for the good. If the assistance of higher powers is to be enlisted, prayer should be motivated by higher interests. It should not be an expression of vain desires based on selfishness and ignorance. If a man desists from making all legitimate efforts and asks God to do for him what he should have done himself, he should not expect God to be so obliging. A good God would not help him to increase his indolence and ignorance. Man has first to do the right and then trust in God for the results.

All genuine prayer is for the improvement of one's spiritual condition and the spiritual condition of others, so that all may be lifted to the level of those whom God has

blessed, and to avoid being dragged down to the condition of those whose spiritual degradation has drawn upon themselves the inevitable retribution called the wrath of God. The essence of the right kind of prayer is given in the opening verses of the Qur'an in simple utterances which it is impossible to improve upon, and this is the chief prayer of the Muslims: 'All praise is due to God, the sustainer and fosterer of the worlds; the beneficent, the merciful, master of the day of requital. Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed favours, not of those on whom wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray' (i. 1-7). There is a sustainer and fosterer of the worlds whose help is to be sought in order that our life may be sustained and fostered. In minor matters, in the daily intercourse of life, human beings serve each other and also seek and require each other's help. But in vital matters of spiritual life the help of God only can avail and direct service is to be offered to Him only. Prayer, at its highest, is a prayer for light and life, light for guidance on the right path, and the goal is the blessedness of rightly-guided and rightly-lived life. We have to seek help from above that we may not go astray and miss the goal. In the call for prayer the caller cries, 'Come towards *falah*,' which means the attainment of the *summum bonum*, the well-being, which is a complete realisation of all intrinsic values. What is sought for is the complete unfolding of all the potentialities of the self, complete self-development or self-realisation. In the call to prayer, the exhortation to come to prayer is immediately followed by the reason for prayer which is given as *falah* or the attainment of well-being. Prayer, therefore, is a great instrument for self-realisation. Without prayer one might attain to partial well-being or gain some material or transitory benefits, but if the human spirit is not attuned to the contemplation of the highest, the ultimate

human destiny is not realised. In another place the Qur'an says, 'Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers' (xxiii. 1,2).

God is the soul of our soul and the life of our life. We are not involuntary emanations from Him; we are organically related to Him. 'He is nearer to us than our own jugular artery'; 'He is the light of the heavens and the earth'. But light is of no avail without sight; if we do not open our eyes, there is darkness for us, even during the effulgence of the midday sun. Prayer is nothing but the opening of our mental eyes for the reception of the light into our spirits. That light is also life. It is possible to guide our lives to some extent by the light of reason and by our own natural instincts, as it is possible to see within a narrow range by artificial light during the night, which is also ultimately derived from the sun. Man, when he prays, is turning towards the sun of all suns, the source of all light and life. He is connecting himself with a great power house whose currents will bestow untold power and energy. He will not walk gropingly but go straight ahead. Materialistic rationalists and atheists assert that the efficacy of prayer cannot be demonstrated. People pray for innumerable things and the percentage of cases in which life grants them the objects of their desire is small as compared with unanswered prayers; therefore the efficacy of prayer cannot be established statistically. It is a fact that spiritual truths cannot be completely established logically or empirically. Apart from empirical proof, the will-to-believe is a potent factor in religious life. As we have already said, there are as many kinds of prayers as there are types of men. If men pray for the alteration of the weather and the weather takes its meteorological course, it demonstrates only the vainness of a particular type of prayer; or if people pray for individual gains and those gains are not secured, it again proves nothing about the efficacy of prayer at its best, when it is

rightly diverted towards spiritual objects. No religion gives a guarantee that God will grant whatever one asks of Him. Generally our desires are only ripples on the surface of life and they do not create any tides in the affairs of men. Islam says that we should pray to be guided on the right path and nobody can assert that a man who is sincerely desirous of being guided aright on the paths of virtue is not helped by concentrating the forces of his personality on the realisation of this desire. It might be said that the effects of prayer are psychological only; concentration on any desire would tend towards its realisation, by the focussing of internal forces and the moulding of circumstances accordingly. The law is a non-moral law; it holds good about good as well as evil desires. The Qur'an takes note of this psychological fact also and asserts unequivocally that whoever craves for and strives after the goods of this world, he too shall secure his object; the soul gets what it strives for, but meeting success in material and physical pursuits only is really a failure in the attainment of the real object of life. The value of those goods is illusory and evanescent. Such a success often deprives a man of eternal values; the more he succeeds in accumulating worldly power with injustice, the farther he deviates from the path of real well-being. So we see, there are laws working also below the level to which genuine prayer refers. If a person investigates the laws of matter and thereby controls the forces of nature, he shall surely meet with success whether he believes in God or not. An atheistic scientist believes in the laws of material nature only, and when he works on the basis of that belief, his expectations are fulfilled and his belief is justified and rewarded. But the reward does not go any farther than that. If he has neglected to study the laws of the moral order and has actually disbelieved in ideal values, he may do himself and humanity more harm than good by manipulating his knowledge for evil and destructive purposes.

Prayer is meant primarily to strengthen a person's moral behaviour and spiritual attitudes. The Qur'an therefore asserts the efficacy of prayer by saying that prayer, if rightly offered, would prevent a person from evil thoughts and evil deeds. '*Salat* keeps (one) away from indecency and evil' (xxix. 45.) In the help thus received, there will work doubtlessly psychological factors too; but Islam says that supramental factors too will lend additional strength. God is a power for the good and, therefore, a person praying for goodness has an eternal force on his side. If God is real, then a person striving in His way must be helped. Some people have a wrong conception of prayer and consider it to be contrary to effort, as if he who prays is a beggar and hence inferior to the man who strives instead of praying. This is a very incorrect and unjust view. All human actions originate in desire and will; our acts are the objectifications of our volitions and our wishes. Prayer, as an exaltation of our desires and their purification, is a necessary step towards right action. Prayer does not dispense with action. On the contrary, it is a mental and volitional preparation for right action. As Islam always enjoins good deeds with faith, so it always enjoins prayer along with the maximum of effort that a person can bring forth for the attainment of a good end. 'And seek assistance through perseverance and prayer' (ii. 45). In the Qur'an, the injunction to pray is often coupled with the doing of good to humanity. As good deeds are the true test of faith, so the genuineness of prayer too is to be established by good deeds. 'So woe to the praying ones who are unmindful of their prayers, who do (good) only in order to be seen by others and withhold alms' (cvii. 4-7)

Prayer, according to Islam, has manifold objects. It established one's contact with the unseen, the infinite power for good which creates and sustains all existence. This is the object of prayer *par excellence*. This contact has a purifying

effect on the heart; it moralises and spiritualises our emotions and instincts. As the Qur'an says, 'Prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil, and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest (force)' (xxix. 45). Abu Hurayra says that he heard the holy Prophet say, 'If one of you has a stream at his door in which he washes himself five times a day, what do you think about his cleanliness? Would it leave any impurity on him?' The Companions replied that it would leave no dirt on him. The Prophet said, 'This is the example of the five prayers with which God washes away all the evils of a man'. So by frequently renovating and strengthening his contact with the source of being, a man purifies and strengthens himself. Contact with God strengthens his contact with goodness. Like everything else in Islam, prayer too is a dynamic reality and has a direct reference to action. It is not begging instead of striving; it is imploring the aid of a real power to strive in the right direction.

Spiritually developed people have always held that prayer is also a source of knowledge. When we talk of knowledge in the religious sense, it does not mean knowledge of the uniformities of material phenomena but knowledge of good and evil, knowledge of God or knowledge of reality. A man who prays devoutly stirs within himself all the conscious and subconscious forces; his confused thoughts about the right course in a situation get clarified and he gets light. Emerson was right when he said that no man ever prayed heartily without learning something, or when Luther said that to pray well is the better half of study. When we approach truth earnestly we are sure to get it reflected in our souls. By calming our emotions and suppressing our vain desires and by rising above the conflict of passions, reason, in its objectivity and purity, is allowed to manifest itself. Prayer itself may be a passion but it is a supraphysical passion which suppresses

and supplants all lower passions which make the human soul a perturbed stream, in which the stars of heaven cannot be reflected. Prayer is a mode of rising above our petty selves.

Sura Fatihah, the prayer *par excellence* of the Muslims which gives the essence of the best prayers that could be offered, needs a closer analysis. It gives the quintessence of Islam and prayer at the same time. It is at once a creed, an attitude towards God and man and the world in general, and the best way of the realisation of freedom. It opens with praise to the fosterer of the worlds. Why should God be praised? Does He relish being flattered by a devotee? Is He fond of encomiums like an absolute monarch? If any weakness of this nature could be attributed to God, He would sink lower than those virtuous human beings who do good for the sake of good and not for being praised. The real significance of praising God is quite different. When we are praising God, we are really praising certain attributes whose appreciation would enlighten us and lift us in the scale of being. When we praise God for being the fosterer of the worlds, its immediate effect on our lives would be that we too should try to be like Him in cherishing and fostering all the values of life. The aim of life is to fulfil and not to destroy anything that is real. When we call Him the fosterer of all the worlds, we are declaring the unity of all existence which is united in God. Worlds do not exist apart as indifferent or hostile to one another. In certain religions and philosophies the world was despised as the embodiment of evil; the lower world was a God-forsaken world. Matter was identified with darkness and flesh with the devil. In ancient mythologies and cosmologies we find existence divided into a heavenly world and a sublunary world. The heavenly world was inhabited by gods or angels and the earth was a vale of woes and tears. The concept of God as lord and fosterer of all the worlds repudiates the distinction between God-favoured and God-despised parts

of existence. Everything in existence is created with a purpose, and the purposes of entire existence are interconnected. Man lives in more worlds than one; he is a microcosm in whom every aspect of the macrocosm is represented. He is matter, life, mind and spirit at the same time and the purpose of his existence is to go on subordinating the lower to the higher order, not by crushing or annihilating the lower but by understanding its nature and by making it subserve higher purposes. As God is the cherisher and fosterer of all the worlds, we too must try to cherish and foster every aspect of the world with which we have to deal. Matter is not to be despised nor is the body with all its natural instincts to be considered a hindrance to the development of the spirit. We live in a coordinating and cooperating universe which has received its unity and harmony from the Creator. We are asked to cherish and foster all that expresses and embodies unity and harmony. As all the other worlds have their unities, the world of humanity too is a unity. This unity too is to be fostered by the worshipper of the Lord of the worlds. Praising of this aspect of God means, therefore, keeping before our eyes, with understanding and appreciation, the chief purpose of life which is the fostering of all eternal and intrinsic values embodied in every plane of existence. The Qur'an does not conceive of any existence as dead and inanimate. It says that all that exists in the heavens and the earth praises and glorifies the Lord in a tongue which man does not understand. There is nothing like dead matter; everything lives and has its being in God.

After praising God as *Rabb*, as fosterer of the worlds, we praise Him for being beneficent and merciful. The words *Rahman* and *Rahim*, untranslatable by simple words in English, comprise goodness, love, mercy, blessing and grace. If the word *love* could convey all this meaning we might say that we are asked to praise God as love. It is

love which creates life and light and beauty; it is a dynamic and creative urge. Love would cherish and not destroy anything that it has created. The Qur'an says, `My mercy encompasses everything' (vii. 156). In another place it is said, `Paradise is coextensive with the heavens and the earth' (lvii. 20). It is related that once a messenger of Heraclius was sitting with the holy Prophet when this verse of the Qur'an was recited about paradise being coextensive with all existence. The messenger objected saying, `Where is then hell?' The Prophet replied, `Where is the night when the day dawns?" Praying to *Rahman and Rahim* and praising Him for these qualities would engender in us the qualities of love and mercy. Thus does prayer become a creative force for good. Man would exercise himself to look at creation and at his fellow-beings from this angle of vision. If he looks for these qualities, he would gradually begin to find them where their existence was not obvious before, and where he sees a lack of them he would strive to create them. Life is not only finding what is good but also creating what is good. Life and love are not static, but dynamic.

Lest we think that divine love, like human love, is a moral holiday which knows no law, we are reminded of the Lord Who is also the legislator and the judge. In the human sphere, most often, love is lawless as law is loveless. But in the nature of God, law and love are indentified. The moral order is a creation of love. Divine love is not egoistic; it does not foster itself but its objects. As the best parents are those who show their love to their children by disciplining them morally, attaching rewards and punishments to good and evil, in order to foster good behaviour so that the children may grow up to be more loving and more lovable, so has divine love instituted the moral order where good and evil produce their natural consequences. If bad actions were always forgiven, they would ultimately destroy the personality of the doer. Some creeds boast of having

replaced law with love. But it is a misconception of the natures of both. Law without love becomes a tyranny and love without law becomes blind and destructive. The law in the physical universe upholds it. Without law there would be chaos. The love of God manifests itself in material creation as law, order and beauty, and in man it expresses itself primarily as a moral order. There is law within and law without, both authoritative and majestic. Kant was expressing a genuine sentiment when he observed that two things filled him with awe: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. We are, therefore, asked to keep in mind this attribute of God that He is the lord of the day of requital. He has instituted the law of compensation and retribution. The Qur'an says that good and evil are weighed minutely in the balance of life; they always produce their effects, however invisible and imperceptible they may be to any eye spiritually untrained. But God is not quick to punish in a manner which may signify revenge. The Qur'an says, `Were Allah to punish men for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of the earth any creature, but He respites them till an appointed term' (xxxv. 45.) In the life of man the effects of evil are counteracted by the good that he does; there is no sin which can irretrievably attach itself to his soul. After having done wrong, the moment he sincerely turns to God and repents, showing his repentance in actually turning away from evil, he regains his disturbed equilibrium and starts afresh with the benefits of experience gained. We are asked to repeat the attributes of God as love and law so that, knowing the nature of reality, we should make a synthesis of the two in our own lives. The test of the rightness of a law is that it is motivated by love. Love is intrinsic, but law is instrumental. In ideal well-being, there ought to be no clash between the two but if, in a certain situation, the two appear to clash, then law is to give place to love which itself may be viewed as a higher law.

Chapter 9

WORSHIP AND SERVICE

Recognising God as the promulgator of the moral order and the judge of good and evil, we are asked to synthesise the concept of love and justice. According to the Qur'an, the two concepts include each other. If God is loving and just, then Him only must man serve, obey and worship. Sura Fatihah proceeds then with the words `Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help' (i. 4). The word `*ibadat* in Arabic has a much wider significance than is conveyed by the word *service.* It means wholehearted obedience as well as worship. It means the total surrender of will to the will of another; hence the word '*abd* means a slave, whose life and will are at the disposal of his master. *Islam* which means total surrender to the will of God necessarily leads to that type of action and attitude which is denoted by the word '*ibadat.* In human relations we witness something approaching to surrender either in the case of lovers or in the case of slaves. Human relation to God is ultimately indefinable and hence is expressed only in analogies. Lovers are in a different category from slaves but they love to call themselves slaves of love because of self-abnegation demanded by love. What is demanded of us by God is voluntary and loving service. If God is our ideal, we are asked to serve Him only. If the ideal is the sum total of all the values of life, then surely no man can rightly serve anything else. When we serve other things besides the ideal we go astray and jeopardise our lives. When we serve our individual instincts without subordinating them to the ideal,

we create chaos in our lives. If we serve money or power, we are not true to our higher selves. When we serve other human beings out of fear or out of love for material gain, we do injustice to ourselves and to others. When we superstitiously serve gods of our own making or the forces of nature, being overawed by them, we are injuring the dignity of humanity. True freedom lies only in the service of the ideal. The man who serves many ideas and diverse urges, mutually hostile and uncoordinated, disrupts the harmony of his being. Life cannot be lived completely unless all our ideas and urges are merged in a single all-embracing ideal whose service should be completely satisfying by doing justice to all the aspects of our being. The tragedy of human life is that man is dominated by false fears and is tempted by illusory gains which draw him away from the ideal. Exclusive service of God means identification with the will of God. Total surrender also means, not the negation of our personality, but its fulfilment; it is the only way of self-realisation. It means the conquest of life and happiness; we stoop to conquer.

In modern times we see a revolt against religion actuated by various ideas and motives. Nietzsche, who preached the gospel of self-assertion and the superman, classified morality as master-morality and slave-morality and inveighed against Christ as the preacher of slave-morality. Religions also be classified as those that say yes to life and those that say no to life. His superman will be above the values of love and justice; he will repudiate humility and mercy as vices; he will revalue all the values preached and practised by the prophets and the saints. The superman will love power only and enhance it ruthlessly at all costs. He shall serve nobody except his own will; he will be a law unto himself. As Louis XIV said, 'I am the State, he will say, I am the Law, I am the life; God is dead.' If we search the teachings of Nietzsche for the revaluation of values, we find

only one value replacing all other values, that is power — power for stronger biological living. When he says that the present man must be superseded by a new species, he is contemplating not a superman but a superbeast who is not guided by love or reason or justice but is urged onwards by a thirst for more physical fitness and power over his surroundings.

There are others who say that religion was born out of ignorance and fear, and man, by his knowledge and effort, must conquer both. They assert that religion teaches slavery; it is an opiate for the oppressed, concocted by the exploiters of humanity; man henceforth shall not serve any power except the dignity of his own humanity.

All such objections are nullified when we keep in mind the Islamic conception of God, and the service and worship that is due to Him. God is a creative being; He is a life-force. Being *Rabb,* the cherisher and fosterer, He is a God of development, a guarantee of the preservation of life and its values. When we are asked to serve God we are asked to serve and advance reason and justice in life. There is no commandment whch is not in the interest of our own advancement. According to Islam, every act of rightful living is an act of worship. The entire creation is meant to worship God and does worship God voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously. Accoridng to the Qur'an, even enjoying the good things of life, procured by rightful effort, is an act of worship. `Say: who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?' (vii. 32). All working of nature is worship and service. `Do you not see that Allah is He whom obeys whoever is in the heavens and the earth, and the sun and the moon, and the stars and the mountains and the trees?" (xxii. 18). The movement of the heavenly bodies is nature's act of worship and all growth is

the service of God (lv. I). 'The seven heavens declare His glory and the earth (too), and those who are in them: and there is not a single thing but glorifies Him with His praise, but you do not understand their glorification' (xvii. 44). All creatures in the heavens and the earth are obedient to Him. We are asked then to serve and worship Him whom all nature serves and obeys. According to Islam, then, obedience to the laws of our own nature is worship and service of God. We are not asked to obey a power external to us because of fear. The Qur'an says that true religion is our own nature as divinely created and ordained. The ideal, then, that we are asked to serve exclusively, is also the ideal of entire creation. Service of God is living in time with the infinite and harmonising ourselves with the laws of our own being.

This is then the creed that says yes to a life which is more than biological existence. All life is God-created, God-guided and God-nourished. Every aspect of existence can serve the purposes of our life; man is destined to command all existence. But man can do this by knowledge and obedience to law. As we learn from the story of Adam presented by the Qur'an, man rose above the angels because of his knowledge and he fell because of disobedience. We rise through knowledge only when we obey the dictates of knowledge; thereby we become masters and not slaves of existence. The morality of the masters is not imposed on them from without; it springs from their own nature. Surrender to God the ideal is freedom in the true sense. We must refuse to be slaves to any partial aspect of existence or to any being other than God, however threatening it may appear. Man is enslaved by man; he is also enslaved by his own ignorance. He has a tendency to serve any power by which he is enslaved. Truth is deliverance from all types of slavery.

Man is a worshipping animal. If he will not worship the true God, he will worship the idols of his own creation. There is no greater calamity for a man than to worship things that are not only below God but even below himself. He who serves and worships any thing or being except God degrades himself. Worship in Islam is not a magical act to bring about supernatural interference in a causally regulated world. It is not flattering an infinite power to win favours from Him merely by the askeing. It is dedication to the spirit of life. It is the winning of independence by the repudiation of all powers except the one that gives us life, purifies us and exalts us.

SALAT

The Prescribed Prayers

We Have seen that prayer is a common feature of religious life at all stages. With the deepening of the idea of God the meaning of prayer is also deepened. Islam, being the purest form of monotheism, has deepened and broadened the meaning of prayer which it is impossible to improve upon. Islam considers prayer to be the dividing line between belief and unbelief. Islamic prayer is purified of all low and irrational elements and is prescribed as a great help in the building up of character by remembering God. In the Qur'an prayer is called *remembrance;* it is primarily that and not supplication for ephemeral benefits. If God is the source as well as the ideal of all existence, prayer then means keeping the highest before our eyes and measuring our conduct by that eternal criterion. In the din and bustle of life, in the clash of emotions and interests, in the stress and strain of immediate urges, in the clamour for selfish gains, we are apt to forget the ideal. Mere profession of faith or vague intellectual assent is not enough. It is the habitual effort to approach the ideal and embody it in our lives that builds up character.

The necessity and efficacy of prayer in general are recognised by all the theistic creeds, but Islamic prayer has certain distinguishing features. Man is required to remember God always in all his attitudes and actions which this remembrance transforms into worship. No action performed in conformity with the will of God is mean. As the Prophet said, 'The honest wage-earner is a friend of God'. Islam visualises the entirety of good life as a perpetual prayer, but during the day and night five prayers are prescribed as a matter of discipline. The prescribed prayers are congregational. Individual prayers, when a man is alone with his God, are additional, supplementary and voluntary, but the prescribed fixed prayers during specified hours of the day and night are congregational and compulsory. They are prescribed as a duty, as man must be exercised in the performance of duty. Let us see how many elements are combined in these prescribed congregational prayers.

(1) Physical cleanlines is essential. There should be no impurity sticking to any part of the body or to the apparel. Cleanliness is next to godliness. A person who offers prayers dutifully at different hours spread over the day and part of the night will necessarily be always cleam. Before prayers he must wash those parts which generally become dirty by ordinary work or natural necessity.

(2) Then the social factor comes in with all its moral and psychological advantages. When a number of persons pray together in unison, the religious emotion is heightened. As Petronius observed, prayers travel more strongly when said in unison, or as Madame de Stael testifies, 'to pray together, in whatever tongue or ritual, is the most tender brotherhood of hope and sympathy that men can contract in this life.

(3) Besides the cumulative heightening of the force of prayer, the Islamic *salat* is a discipline in demorcarcy.

Equality before God is reflected as equality among men. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the powerful and the weak, must stand together, shoulder to shoulder, all equally humble before God. Islamic congregational prayer is a great leveller. This equalisation of opportunity is what human society has to aim at. In the mosque the Muslims become a classless society. If they forget to actualise that ideal outside the mosque, it only means that the prayer has not yet entered their souls as it ought to. But the ideal is there if it is allowed to work in their lives.

(4) Coordination of effort is another advatageous aspect. All movements are performed in unison; the whole congregation rises together, bows together and prostrates together. This is a lesson that in all the great things of life requiring joint effort people have to work as a team; the individual will has to be subordinated to the social will.

(5) It also establishes the principle of leadership. There is no hereditary or ordained priesthood in Islam; professional priests are not envisaged. The best man in the congregation is asked to lead the prayers; he must be considered best from the point of view of knowledge and piety. This is a lesson for the choice of leaders. They are not to be chosen because of their wealth or social position or because of belonging to a particular profession but solely on the basis of knowledge and character. Age too is not an essential factor. There were cases during the lifetime of the Prophet when, in an illiterate congregation, a child was asked to lead the prayers because he was the only one who could recite some verses of the Qur'an. Once a leader is chosen, he is to be implicitly obeyed in all movements, as the Prophet said, 'Obey your leader even if he is a negro'. Islam has embodied military discipline also in its congregational prayers. At the call for prayers, hundreds and thousands of people, sitting or moving about helter-skelter,

immediately fall into serried ranks. Physical movement is also a help for a healthy mental attitude as even the atheistic Nietzsche observed that sedentary thinking is not to be trusted and the healthiest thoughts are those produced during healthy physical movements.

(6) In Muslim prayer there is another element of unification. All Muslims all over the globe turn their faces towards one centre, the Ka'ba. This strengthens the sense of unity in a worldwide brotherhood. When the Qur'an ordered all Muslims to turn their faces towards the Ka'ba while praying, it added that this did not form the essence of prayers but an additional help for unification, otherwise 'God's is the East and God's is the West; in whichsoever direction you turn your face there is the face of Allah; the chief thing is to strive for goodness'.

(7) For the individual or congregatinal prayers no special places of worship like churches or temples are necessary. As the Prophet said, 'God has made the whole earth a mosque for us'. Wherever at the time of prayers one or more Mulims find themselves there they can pray singly or in company. No paraphernalia is required for worship.

Prayer is a direct communion with God; no intermediary is required; no intercession is sought from a prophet or an incarnation. In his prayers a Muslim prays for himself and for others including the Prophet. He prays for the Prophet in gratitude for the guidance he has received from him. The Prophet too is one of the servants of God who cannot intercede without His will. So a Muslim even in congregation is still alone with his God, even though fortifying his social self in a congregation.

The Islamic mode of worship indicates that Islam is pre-eminently a social creed. In every one of its injunctions there is a direct or indirect reference to society. It prohibits a

man to seek his own salvation by islolating himself from society. There is no monkery in Islam. Prayer is not an end in itself but a means of personal and social uplift. It is meant to improve a person's social morality and it disciplines him to work in a democratic society guided by the end of general well-being. The Qur'an says that if these ends are divorced from prayer, it ceases to be prayer. In the Qur'anic teachings, prayer is often joined with charity as a correlate. In the very beginning of the Book, we find the three essentials of religious life put together. 'This book is a guide to those who guard (against evil), those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them' (ii. 2,3); 'Have you seen him who denies the fact of retribution; that is the one who treats the orphan with harshness, and does not urge (others) to feed the poor' (cvii.1-3); 'Woe to the praying ones who are unmindful of their prayers' (cvii. 4,5). As the prayer has a social reference, the person praying is asked not to use the first person singular but to use the plural in imploring God. 'Thee only do we serve and Thee only do we beseech for help' (i. 4).

After the congregational prayers, the gathering begins to serve all other purposes of life. Problems of general welfare are discussed. The leader addresses them on all vital topics. Political and economic questions are brought forward for discussion. Any person can stand up and present even his individual need before the community. The atmosphere of prayer is brought to bear on every question; the mood has been moralised and spiritualised and, psychologically, the air is full of truth and goodwill. A nation having this conception of prayer needs no other clubs or assemblies. In early days of Islam this was the only assembly of the Muslims. Vital quetions of war and peace were discussed there. The president of the republic presented his plans and gave his orders after the prayers.

Any member of the congregation could openly question the president about anything that he considered to be questionable. By frequently coming together everyone got acquainted with eyeryone else. There was no secret diplomacy in politics. Everything was above board.

So we see how many elements of general welfare and community life were gathered together by Islam in its institution of congregational prayers. Prayer becomes an enlightenment and discipline for life, and a mainstay of individual and social morality. No great ceremony or ritual was required for worship; no images, no pictures, no priestly abracadabra; no gods or angels or spirits invoked; no intercession of intermediaries demanded. Prayers are used only for moral and social uplift and as a preparation for life. The life hereafter gets a second place in comparison with the betterment of life here and now. The Muslim is asked to pray, 'O God, grant us well-being in this life and in the hereafter' (ii. 201), because the hereafter is determined by what we make of life here. 'He who is blind here shall be blind in the hereafter' (xvii. 72). Islam is a religion for this life; it is not a belief in transcendental mysteries or dogmas about another world. Islam has no dogmas; it is a way of life, determined by a philosophy of life, which teaches that life is worth living because its essence is rationality and all intrinsic values shall be preserved.

THE RIGHT PATH

We are asked to pray to be guided on the right path. But how to know what is the right path? All disputes of philosophies and creeds and all clashes of ideologies are concerned with the definition of the right path. Let us analyse the concept a little closely. A path is that leads to a destination; it is a means to the attainment of an end. Human life is a realm of ends. At first sight it appears that human beings have innumerable ends and countless means

for the attainment of those ends. But most of these ends are only derivatives from a few intrinsic values which are sought because of their self-evident goodness. Truth, beauty and goodness are sought, not because of some ends outside themselves but because the human soul considers them and feels them as valuable in themselves. Plato formed the conception of a supreme good which should embody all the intrinsic values. Man strives ultimately for a *summum bonum*. Man is a finite being having the potentialities of infinity and, therefore, nothing partial, limited or fragmentary can give him complete satisfaction. The concept of the right path is a correlative of the idea of the right end. We should have some idea of the object of life before we begin to look for the path or paths which would lead to it. The word 'life' is used in two different meanings. We are material and animal structures subject to the laws of self-preservation of these aspects. Man, like other animals, strives to maintain his organism. He wants food and protection from elements that endanger his physical existence. If man were merely a physical organism, the object of his life would be merely to maintain it in health and strength and the path that would lead to it would be the path of physical fitness. But that would not distinguish him from other animals. The distinguishing feature of man is that he possesses a conscious rational mind. The object of his life, therefore, must be the development of his rationality and personality. If this rationality were only a biological instrument in the struggle for physical existence, it would give him no great advantage over other animals, because they accomplish by instinct in a more direct and more successful manner what he is able to do with reason only in a halting and clumsy way. The marvels of animal instincts are not even intelligible to human reason. The object of reason, therefore, could not be only an additional help in the maintenance of our biological existence. Reason develops a

life of its own which transcends our physical needs. As Christ said, although bread is necessary, `we do not live by bread alone'. The life of the spirit begins where the life of the body ends. We start to be human only when we have fulfilled our bodily needs. So long as we are engaged in the satisfaction of our bodily needs only, we are classed with animals and usually sink below them in the success achieved. As the Qur'an says of those who ignore the life of the spirit. `They are as cattle, nay, they are in worse error' (vii. 179). Man is destined to lead two lives, the life of the body and the life of the spirit, but the two lives are to be harmonised. They can be harmonised by the subordination of the lower to the higher, not by the annihilation of the lower. All great religions recognise this double meaning of life. As Christ said, he who pursues life in its physical aspect only shall lose life in the higher aspect, and he who is prepared to lose the lower life shall attain the higher life. As we cannot form any concept higher than life, therefore we can say that the object of life is life, more life, higher life, more comprehensive life. The *summum bonum*, therefore, is the fulfilment of life with all its potentialities, which should be the realisation of the eternal values of life, and the actualisation of its possibilities.

When the Qur'an contrasts higher with lower life it usually uses the terms `life here' and `life hereafter'. But the hereafter is not a temporal or spatial concept; it is a judgement of values. The hereafter penetrates the life lived here and now, and the life here is a preparation for that. The higher is not higher in space or later in time. Islam believes in the survival of the human ego in time as well, but the higher and lower, here and hereafter, are determined by the type of life that is lived. The life of mere physcial demands and animal urges has to be transcended in everyday living. When we pray, therefore, to be guided on the right path, it

must be a road towards the realisation of supraphysical values.

Sura Fatihah gives a very simple criterion of the rightness of the path: it is the path of the blessed, those who were granted all the intrinsic values of life.

We know very little of our physiological mechanism but we know what health or, its opposite, disease means. We know healthy persons by their life and activities. It is understood that an average man knows and feels what health is. There are certain ways of life that lead to physical health and we all know health as a great blessing. If we were merely physical beings, physical health would be our ultimate end and the path leading to it would be the right path; it would be the path of those who have attained health. But when we are thinking of a man as blessed, we are not primarily thinking of physical health, though complete blessedness should include it. We are bodies as well as souls; our blessedness must include spiritual blessedness. A man is blessed if his reason is clear and strong and guides his life aright and if his actions are permeated by love. The man blessed by God, therefore, must be a man of true knowledge; reason being his distinguishing feature, he could not be called blessed if his reason is deficient. As the Qur'an says, 'Whosoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good' (ii. 269). Blessedness would, therefore, include physical health as well as mental well-being; an insight into truth is an essential component of blessedness. As man is a social being, he cannot be blessed merely in his separate individuality; a good life must radiate blessedness; goodness must be active and dynamic. Goodness, therefore, is a necessary element of well-being. A tree is known by its fruit, and to the rightness of the path, too, we must apply a pragmatic test. The sura we are trying to analyse does supply this test. If blessedness means knowledge and

goodness, then we know that those who are blessed must have followed the right path. The blessed are those who have succeeded in the real meaning of the word `success'. The best way to know the right path is to study the lives of those who have succeeded. If a man wants to make money he closely watches the ways of the money-makers, those who have amassed fortunes, and he makes exemplars of them. If he imitates them he will surely make money. As the Qur'an says, those who strive for the goods of this world will get them because the general law is that man gets what he strives after. But if wealth only has been their aim, they have neglected all the higher values of life and by their own efforts have deprived themselves of life in the higher sense; they have clasped at a shadow and lost the substance. Real success has come only to the man who has developed knowledge and love and goodness based on the firm faith that they are real and abiding and they are rooted in the source of existence which he reveres and worships as God; he only can truly feel happy and secure and get the joy which is born of self-realisation and well-being. The Qur'an swears by the Time presenting all human history as a witness that `Most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good deeds' (ciii. 2-3). And the Bible puts the same truth emphatically in the words, `What doth it avail a man if he gaineth the whole world and loseth his soul?' By *soul* here is meant all the supraphysical values that emanate from God; they are not based on individual desires or material gains, nor are they tantamount to the maintenance of physical life only.

By looking at the lives of men we can know the true meaning of success or failure. We revere only those who have succeeed in the higher sense. Example is the most effective teacher; therefore we are asked to fix our minds on the mode of life of those who have been blessed. By following in their footsteps we shall be following the right

path for which we pray. Man wants to be blessed but he does not know where true blessedness lies. As Rumi says, everyone hankers after gold but there are few who can distinguish gold from tinsel. All that glitters is not gold; so all that lures us, promising blessedness, does not fulfil the promise. After having pursued false clues we realise at the end that we have deviated from the goal of happiness, harmony and well-being. 'As for those who disbelive, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one supposeth it to be water till he cometh to it and findeth it naught, and findeth, in its place, Allah, who payeth him his due' (xxiv. 39).

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Chapter 10

THE ETHICS OF ISLAM

The science of ethics may be defined in various ways. It is the study of what is right or good in conduct, or the study of good and evil. It tries to define the nature of right and good. What is the end or ideal at which men aim or ought to aim? Is there any supreme end in human life or the different ends pursued have no organic relation with one another? Since ethics is the study of conduct as a whole and not of any particular kinds of conduct, it is not any special ends that it sets itself to consider but the supreme or ultimate end to which our whole lives are directed. If the ultimate end is determined, then the special ends could be valued as advancing or retarding it or as indifferent to the ideal. There are many ends that human beings desire for their own sake; such ends are called ultimate goods or intrinsic values. Knowledge and beauty and happiness, for instance, are desired not only as means to other ends but as intrinsically valuable whose goodness rests in themselves. It is the function of ethics to provide general principles for estimating the real worth of these ultimate ends. What is the real worth of these spontaneous interests? Is the attainment of these desired objects good in itself or is there some ultimate criterion, some principle or sets of mutually consistent principles by which we may determine the value of the staisfaction of our interests?

More than the theoretical discussion of philosophers about the nature of the *summum bonum,* religious belief has

been the mainstay of morality. Scientifically, ethics is discussed apart from religious beliefs or metaphysical presumption but any thorough discussion of the ultimate nature of the ideal, which has to determine our good and evil, forces us to define our belief in the ultimate reality in which our lives are rooted and from which they spring. The ethics of Islam does not stand by itself but follows as a corollary from the foundations of religious belief.

What scientific ethichs calls the search for *summum bonum,* the ideal end or the ultimate purpose, religion calls the search for God. It is only a difference of terminology. Plato calls it the Good; Islam calls it God. So in the discussion of ultimate ends we will be using freely as equivalents, God, the Good, and the Ideal.

Islam, too, believes, like philosophic ethics, that all ends must converge in the ultimate end. Why should they do so? Islam has a simple answer for this. Life originates in the unity of existence which is a manifestation of the unity of God. Even the material universe is a *universe* and not a *multiverse*. Nature, life, and mind are characterised by unity in diversity. In spite of all its multifariousness, existence aims at uniformities and the numerous laws of nature are presumed to be derivatives from some one law. Morality too must conform to the one law of unity in diversity. Human desires are multifarious and place before themselves numerous special ends. Man, as an individual, is an organic unity and as a social being he is part of a social organism; organic life denotes a unity and singleness of an ultimate purpose. Consistency is the test of reality and of truth. The multiplicity of human desires cannot be left in a disjointed and chaotic condition; there must be a controlling principle and a controlling purpose. In Islam this is supplied by the nature of God.

In discussing the nature of God in the previous chapters we have established on the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an that God is a rational creative will. He is not the absolute of the metaphysicians nor is He the will-less reason of Aristotle, nor the source from which creation emanates as an overflow as is the teaching of neo-Platonism. The God of Islam is teleologically creative. He is not pure thought but supreme consciousness embodying in Himself the ultimate values of life and a guarantee of their preservation. The Qur'an says, 'To Him belong the most beautiful attributes'. So the postulate of Islamic ethics is that the ultimate values of life like love and knowledge and happiness are not temporary, subjective, relative and illusory products of a particular phase of evolution, but objective and ultimate. They cannot be perceived in their perfection but as ideals we can approach them eternally. Our intrinsic and ultimate values are therefore given as essential attributes of God or the ideal. These values emerging from a unity must be organically related to one another. This was also the conviction of Plato reached by dialectic that his three ultimate values—truth, beauty and goodness—are really three facts of the same reality which he called the Good.

Let us see how the idea of the good is determined by Islam, by looking at goodness as an attribute of God. God is the creator, so goodness must be creative; there could be nothing like passive contemplative goodness; the good, therefore, is not a static but a dynamic conception: it refers not to mere knowledge but to deeds which strive to embody truth in actions. The Qur'an says that God the creator is a fosterer, a merciful and beneficent God; love as an intrinsic value follows from the nature of ultimate reality. Moral action then must be motivated by fostering and cherishing, by creating ever richer harmonies of existence. Good is that which has a tendency to multiply, and evil is destructive of others as well as of itself. The Qur'an says repeatedly that

the punishment of evil is an evil equivalent to it, which means its negation, but the reward of good is multiplied manifold. 'Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly' (vi. 161). From this we derive a good definition of what we should understand by goodness and what is ultimately good. Good is creative and constructive; it maintains itself and the rest of life. The hedonists define good as that which is desired and that which gives pleasure. But this is a very poor definition because a perverted mind desires much that is injurious and self-destructive, and pleasure is sometimes attached to many things that destroy life and defeat the ends of pleasure itself. We know psychologically that pleasure is not always the motive of our actions; the virtuous pursue their good aims in spite of incurring more pain that pleassure and the vicious also pursue their passions recklessly not because they give pleasure to them but because they have become imperious, uncontrollable urges which the doer himself sometimes knows are driving him to perdition. According to Islam, then, the attaiment of desires is not the test of goodness, Goodness is the preservation of the values of life. But life is not merely physical or biological. We are more than our bodies; bodies are merely the instruments of our souls. Human life consists in the realisation of aims which transcend our bodily needs. In our bodily needs we are one with the animal world. Humanity begins with the transcendence of the physical. Goodness then is not only the preservation but the enhancement of our essential reality, our true selves.

Herbert Spencer and other evolutionary writers on ethics say that moral principles are not objective and transcendental but are derived from the experience of the race as successful modes of self-preservation and racial

stability. Islam would not dispute this definition of the good as preservative but its conception of man is not that of a physcial organism only which has somehow to preserve itself by struggle, adaptation and procreation. The evolutionists have rightly hit at the nature of the good as that which has a tendency to survive and makes those beings survive who practise it; only their conception of life and what is to be preserved is very narrow. Islam says that human soul is the spirit of God Himself and man is created to assimilate more and more the attributes of God. Truth, beauty, love, peace and happiness are intrinsic values because they are rooted in the ultimate reality. We conceive them in their relativity but they are absolute as attributes of God. They have to be preserved by man and morality consists in the effort to preserve them.

Similarly, Islam would support the partial truth of hedonism that pleasure too it intrinsically desirable, by the acceptance of the thesis that ultimately virtue and happiness must coincide. But the direct pursuit of pleasure defeats its own end. Happiness must result as a byproduct of life rightly lived. Here we must meet an objection which asserts that almost all the great religions are hedonistic. This objection has arisen from the fact that religion, when it depicts the rewards of virtue and the punishments of vice, uses sensualistic language. Paradise is conceived as the vision of unfulfilled desire which is physical. Now there are two ways of looking at these descriptions: they may be taken literally or they may be taken metaphorically. The grosser minds have always taken them literally but the Qur'an, notwithstanding very vivid physical imagery, warns us that they are to be taken as analogies and parables. It says, 'The analogy of paradise promised to the righteous is that there flow in it rivers; its fruit is perpetual and its shade' (xlvii. 15). Again we have, 'A likeness of the garden which the righteous are promised: there flow beneath it rivers, its

fruits are perpetual and its plentiness' (xiii. 35). Again there is a warning against taking this sensual imagery as literal truth: 'No soul knows what is in store for them of that which will refresh the eyes; a reward for what they did' (xxxii. 17). And the Prophet himself said, 'Allah says, "I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what the mind of man has not conceived"' (Bukh. 59: 8). And Ibn 'Abbas, the famous Companion and commentator of the Qur'an, is reported to have said: 'In paradise there are no foods of this life except the name.'

But the Qur'an also uses spiritualised and etherealised imagery in describing the attributes of God and depicting the rewards and punishments of good and evil. The same Qur'an which depicts God as establishing Himself on a throne also elsewhere calls Him 'light of the heavens and the earth' which is self-luminous and non-spatial, neither of the east nor of the west. One of the essential attributes of God is knowledge or consciousness for which the best physical analogy is that of light. There are some philosophies that have conceived of God primarily as light because they could find no better analogy. The great mystical metaphysics of Plotinus, which has greatly influenced Christian as well as Muslim mystical philosophy, is chiefly based on the analogy of the absolute as light. The Qur'an too has used that analogy but warns us that it is not to be taken as physical light. One of the great rewards of virtue is described as seeing God or meeting one's Lord. Now God is light and life which embodies all values of existence. The chief reward therefore is the attainment of life divine in which a man does not become God but is in some way identified with Him. The Qur'an says that this heightened consciousness results from the life of virtue. What the virtuous get is more light, and this is the real craving of the great souls. Goethe's last words were 'Licht,

Mehr Licht' (light, more light). All his life he had been striving through intellects and through art to get more light and to shed more light, and while departing he still gave expression to that craving, because there is always more and more of it. 'On that day you will see the faithful men and the faithful women--their light running before them and on their right hand' (lvii. 12); 'O you who believevel! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you, and Allah is forgiving, merciful' (lvii.28).

The question often arises in certain weak moments in certain minds as to why one should practise virtue; material and physical pleasures are not necessary concomitants of virtue in this life. The spectacle of virtue suffering and vice having good time has been before the eyes of man ever since he began to reflect. People ask what is the reward of virtue. One reply to this question which appears crude even to some refined minds is that in the life hereafter the balance will be redressed. God will proportion happiness to virtue and misery to vice; the virtuous there will rejoice and the vicious suffer unspeakable torments. As religion has to exhort all people to be virtuous and shun vice in the interest of personal and social well-being, this kind of sermonising too has its place in the reformation of humanity at a lower level. But as there are grades of intellectual apprehension, so there are grades of apprehension of moral and spiritual verities. The mind at lower levels which is yet in the grip of the senses has to be appealed to in terms of the senses. But as we rise higher our conception or virtue and vice and of the consequent rewards and punishments becomes more and more intellectualised. The Qur'an gives us moral wisdom at this higher level where it ceases to use sensual imagery. It gives a transcendental conception of God as a reality which is not like anything. 'Vision

comprehends Him not, but he comprehends (all) vision' (vi. 104); 'He is the light of the heavens and the earth' (xxiv. 35). The reward of consummated well-being is meeting and seeing this Lord of light and life. This seeing must be some sort of perception which transcends the division of subject and object; it may be identification with eternal reality for which we have neither adequate experience nor categories of understanding. This is often mentioned in the Qur'an as the highest reward of virtue. Harmony which is the spirit and goal of existence is called peace in the terminology of the Qur'an. In peace the contending individuals and elements do not cease to exist; they get reconciled retaining their individuality but realising their identity of purpose. Natural beauty and art are expressions of this peace which we call harmony. Intellectual understanding is peace, aesthetic contemplation is peace and virtue and happiness are peace. So paradise is called by the Qur'an `Abode of Peace' wherein the greeting of the residents will be `Peace, peace.' The very word *islam* means peace, the second meaning being surrender to the will of God and the two meanings fuse together into the essence of all morality and spirituality which is the attainment of peace and harmony by surrendering the individual will to the universal will, whereby the finite participates in the life of the infinite.

The answer of Islam, therefore, to the question as to what is the end or purpose of life and what is the reward of virtue, is that better and higher life is the reward of good life and happiness is an essential ingredient of the *summum bonum*. `Whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, We will certainly make him live a pure, good and happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did' (xvi. 97).

One point needs some further elucidation. As already stated, whenever the Qur'an compares lower with

higher life, the higher life is termed `the life hereafter,' in comparison with which life here and now, called the life of this world, is called the life of vain sport. It must be clearly understood that in the realm of spirit time and space have no meaning; these are categories of the world of sense. If time exists at all gradations of being and all dimensions of consciousness, its nature must be different at different levels. As the Qur'an says, the day with God is a hundred thousand years; it is not measured by the diurnal motion of the earth round the sun, It is similarly said in the Qur'an in more than one place that time sense of the people on the day of judgement would be quite different; the interval between their life on this earth and judgement would be almost annihilated. 'And on the day when He will gather them, it will be as though they had not stayed but an hour of the day' (x.45). Non-spatial and non-temporal reality is unseen and therefore the nature of judgement, after we leave this earthen frame and enter into new dimensions of being and consciousness, cannot be comprehended now. 'God's is the unseen of the heavens and the earth; and the matter of the hour of judgment is but the twinkling of an eye or nigher still; surely Allah has power over all things' (xvi. 77). Although life will survive physical dissolution and the ego will continue in other spheres carrying with it the effects of its good and evil, the nature of the judgement in those spheres cannot be realised by us, but we have clear indications from the Qur'an that our time judgements do not apply there; they cease to have any validity with the cessation of physical existence. Physical time is an aspect of physical existence only.

So we see when religious terminology uses the terms of *time* and *space* and talks of the earth below and heaven above or uses the words *here* and *hereafter*, it is only using temporal and spatial terms for value judgements. The higher is not higher in space but in value. The great mystics of

Islam understood it very clearly. Rumi says that 'Love (the intuitive realisation of God) is not going up or going down in space but shedding the limitations of lower existence.' And so Sarmad the mystic saint talks of space in connection with the Prophet's ascension (Mi'raj): 'He who has been initiated into the secret of reality becomes more extensive than the heavens; Mulla says that the Prophet went up bodily to the heavens but Sarmad says the heavens entered him. 'So about time, when Islam used the term Day of Judgement, we have not to understand by day anything that is a product of the solar system. We have been warned that the day with God is not our day. When the Qur'an says that the day with God is a hundred thousand years, some commentators have interpreted it as an epoch, and accordingly six days of creation are taken to be six epochs, Others do not take these reckonings literally but metaphorically and the correct view seems to be that time outside our temporal realm either does not exist or its nature is quite different. The whole of the philosophy of Bergson is based on the difference between spatial time and what he calls creative duration which can be only spiritually apprehended by intuition when life enters into direct contact with reality.

The rewards of virtue and vice, according to Islam, are both cash and credit. Surrender to the ideal, with a firm belief in its reality, is a life both of virtue and inner happiness. Such a man is true to his real self and, therefore, attains inner peace which is real happiness and is quite different from a sum of pleasures. This inner happiness, the peace of the Lord, more than compensates for lack of material gain or physical pain or strain. As to the rewards of good and evil, the Qur'an says that they are recorded every moment and weighed in a very accurate and sensitive balance which does not err by the weight of an atom. The life of a man is not determined by this or that sin but by the

balance of good and evil done by him. He may have done countless wrongs, but if the good that he has done outweighs them, his life would be good on the whole and he will not be damned. We find in more than one place in the Qur'an that the merciful God is not quick to punish; if He were quick to punish deviations from the right path, no living being would be left on the earth. Sin is not a thing that sticks to the soul ineradicably. `Surely good deeds take away evil deeds' (xi.114). It is the nature of evil that, sooner or later, it is destroyed either by good deeds or by its own inherent destructiveness. `And say, the truth has come and the falsehood vanished; surely falsehood is a vanishing thing' (xvii. 81).

One of the great services that Islam has rendered to humanity is delivering it from the unnecessary and imaginary terror of sin. Nietzsche said that sin was a Jewish invention. There is no doubt that Jehovah, as presented in the Old Testament, seems to inspire more terror than love and punishes whole families and groups ruthlessly for real or imaginary sins, but sin, as something that enters the soul and is inherited from Adam downwards by every child that is born, is a Christian invention. It is one of the ironies of human ideologies that Christian theology could present God as love and at the same time preach the doctrine of original sin. The Qur'an repudiates this doctrine most emphatically. Man, according to the Qur'an, is endowed with a divine nature with the gift of free-will which may lead him astray, but it is wrong to say that he is originally created to go astray. Talking of man the Qur'an says, 'The nature of God, in which He has made man'. The Prophet elucidated this in his famous saying that 'every child is born with natural endowments, which if kept pure and intact would lead him to Islam, but it is the parents that make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian,' which are deviations from the religion of nature.

Modern psychology has revealed the hell that is let loose in the subconscious mind of some religious people who possess a large degree of emotional intensity. A Mulsim, who understands the spirit of Islam, will be saved from these painful complexes. The God of Islam is a forgiving God and He has so constituted man that he will do good as well as evil deeds. The difference in the lives of men arises from the balance of good and evil in their lives. Perfectly spotless saints and utterly black sinners with no modicum of good in them have perhaps never existed. Islam demands that a man should not become mad with despair if he had committed a sin. True repentance wipes away all sin. He should keep the ideal before his eyes and constantly judge himself, so that evil does not overweigh in his life. The Qur'an says that despair is a sign of unbelief. The love and mercy of God cover every thing and every being. According to the Qur'an, all sins can be wiped away by good deeds and repentance, except the sin of disbelief in the reality of the ideal, which contradicts belief in God. If a man ceases to believe in the reality of the moral ideal, he is lost and cannot regain his true self unless he begins to believe in the moral ideal again. It is a Muslim belief that ultimately all souls will be saved and hell will become empty. I must repeat here what the Prophet replied to the messenger of Heraclius when he asked, 'Your Qur'an says that paradise is coextensive with the heavens and the earth; where will then hell be situated?' The Prophet replied, 'Where is the night when the day appears?'

Man is not pure reason; he is endowed with a number of instincts every one of which has a tendency to dominafe him. When the soul is under the sway of an instinct and there is a ruling passion which would obey that instinct and not reason, the self in this condition is termed by the Qur'an the commanding or compelling self (*nafs ammara).* When conscience or a man's higher self

admonishes him, this state of the self is termed the admonishing self (*nafs lawwama)*. The highest state of the self is that in which it is completely harmonised and attains peace; then the self is called the satisfied self *(nafs mutma'innah)*. The ethics of Islam is the ethics of self-realisation and by self it means the complete self of man including his instincts and feelings. As man physically is an organism of many parts, each part endowed with a special function, so is the soul of man a spiritual organism in which every instinct has a definite function. Islam prohibits the complete suppression of any instinct. Man has to profit by all urges, but in subordination to his personal as well as social well-being, in accordance with the will of Allah.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

It is an indisputable fact in the history of thought that ethics as a science was first developed by the Greeks. As languages are in existence long before someone develops their grammar to understand and clarify the principles on which the language has been unconsciously constructed, so man's perception of the difference between good and evil preceded the science of ethics by millenniums. As language is a natural product of man's sociability, so is his morality; the difference between good and evil springs naturally from human relations. It is on account of this that Islam designates morality and religion as nature. It appears that Islam picks up humanity only at a civilised stage. When it says that prophets were sent to all peoples, it already recognises human beings as organised into societies with a customary code of morals and manners. Again, when it says that religion has always been one and the same in its essentials and all prophets and saints form one brotherhood, it is undoubtedly taking humanity at a particularly advanced stage when the idea of one creator, the judge of good and evil, has already emerged. We find communities of savages

and barbarians even now scattered all over the globe, whose concepts of divinity are crude animism and totemism and whose morality consists only of tribal customs which have helped them to some extent in tribal self-preservation.

Religion and morlaity have been advancing and retarding either in parallels or have been interacting on each other. In Greece, as we see in Homer, polytheistic and naturalistic religion intertwined with a dubious kind of morlaity as reflected in the character of his gods. As we approach the period of Greek glory in which this nation began to reflect on the nature of being and the place of man in this cosmos, we find that the ideas of social justice and of good and evil have already advanced considerably beyond their religious conceptions. Just before the time of Socrates we find moral confusion much more in theory than in practice. The city-state of Athens was a particularly advanced, refined and prosperous state enriched by commerce and by exploitation of slave labour. There never was greater freedom of thought and expression than we find in the time of Pericles who, in his famous speech, takes pride in the civilisation of his state where citizens have the greatest freedom to form their views, not only on matters of state but about life in general, and express them without fear or hindrance. For a considerable period, this liberty did not disrupt the social and political order, because of the patriotism of the citizens and religious practices organised on the basis of polytheism. Just before Socrates, we see the sophists inculcating a moral chaos in theory, which might have resulted in a practical chaos but for the emergence of intellectual geniuses like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. With these thinkers reason emerged for the first time in human history in all its independence and purity. They formed a clear concept of nature as the embodiment of reason and not of arbitrary and capricious wills. With them emerged the concept of the organised unity of the universe. Reason

which was unconscious in nature became conscious and self-conscious in man. The distinguishing trait of man is conscious reason whose nature is unity and harmony. Man's theoretical reason, which grasps the laws of things, and his practical reason which regulates his life are fundamentally one and the same. With Socrates and Plato emerged the idea of the identity of reason with reality and the identity of both with the good which they considered to be the source of all reality and rationality. At this stage the Greek mind ceased to bother about gods or even one transcendent God of an arbitrary will and identified the ultimate reality with reason. It is said that the Greeks developed intellectually because they freed themselves from the shackles of religion, In one way it is true. Their traditional religion was polytheistic and a set of superstitions. When religion becomes corrupt and is left behind even the best conscience of its votaries, it is high time that the people turn their backs to it, if they want to live and develop on healthy lines. When beliefs and customs begin to corrupt them, a revolt against religion or indifference to it becomes a paramount necessity.

So far as the development of religious consciousness is concerned, the history of two nations is very significant and instructive: the Hebrews and the Hindus, The Hebrews or the Israelites seem to have produced more prophets than any other people, which betokens intensity of religious consciousness. Originally their god, Jehovah, was a tribal god concerned mostly with the vicissitudes of life of this people whom he seemed to have chosen both for his favours and for his wrath. In the early stages their concept of God appears very crude and so is their political morality. Their morality is ruthlessly tribal, as reflected in their own history and in the attributes and actions of Jehovah. Monotheism is not of much value intellectually or morally if the concept of the one God is crudely tribal and anthropomorphic. If a

nation chooses the worship of one God and throws away to the scrap-heap all the other gods, still it will not be much of an advance if that one is parochial, narrow, irrationally self-willed, and moves like a savage by anger or revenge. The study of the Old Testament presents a slow but steady evolution of the idea of God as a rational, just and benevolent being whose attributes gradually become universal and transcend the welfare of the Israelites only. The Qur'an seems to point to Abraham as the first monotheist among the Israelites who not only reached the idea of one God but had an exalted conception of Him. After him we see the idea of an impartially just God, the God of righteousness and love developing till we reach Jesus Christ with whom God is spirit and light and life of all existence. The irrational terror of Jehovah is gone, and morality, developing through righteousness and justice, has reached love as the ultimate concept and the final urge. Here we have reached pure monotheism, and superior ethics, which preaches not only correct and conventional morality but wants to reform man's inner life by laying stress on the purity of motives. The Jewish emphasis on law is supplemented and spiritualised by love which should be the source and the judge of all law. Jews, who considered all other nations as hostile and fuel for hell, are taught to love even their enemies and return good for evil.

The Hindus developed on somewhat different lines. Side by side with their polytheism we find reflections on the nature of existence. Brahmanic religion began to develop systems of metaphysics in which religion and philosophy were never quite separated. From polytheism they developed not so much monotheism as monism, the concept of an absolute beyond life and existence, transcending all distinctions of good and evil. The absolute stood beyond the moral order; human values were relative and transitory that had no place in God and must be ultimately

transcended. Spatio-temporal life became an illusion and even gods became part of that illusion.

The concepts of a transcendental absolute never influence morality very much or, it may be asserted, they affect it adversely. As William James said, absolutism is a moral holiday. The Hindus developed pantheism and monism more than theism, and their social morality was perverted by the caste domination of the Brahmans. The Dharma Shastra of Manu, which is their classical code of religion, laws and morality, is a standing monument of an ethics that has not yet become universal and objective, but is based on class exploitation on which the seal of revelation has been set. In Buddhism, which is a development of Hinduism, we see a mighty attempt at reformation. Buddha wanted to lift his nation and ultimately all humanity from tribal to universal morality. He repudiated caste distinctions and swept away the whole Pantheon of Hindu gods and mythology; he did away even with the idea of one anthropomorphic God, but his concept of existence was tainted with Hindu *mayaism* and absolutism which had taken firm root in the Hindu mind. Like Christ, he picked up only love and mercy as real sources of all morality. But his psychology and sociology were extremely defective, and so was his view of existence. So far as the nature of existence is concerned, his enlightenment reached the conclusion that life is full of evil and the source of all evil is desire. He made no distinction between desirable ends and undesirable ends. All ends are illusory and desires for all ends must be extirpated. Ending of life is the end of life. Life and woe are two sides of the same medal; you cannot have the one without the other. No amount of virtue can create well-being or happiness either in this or the next world; both worlds are illusory being the product of desire. There is a moral order in the universe which keeps beings entangled in transmigration. The purpose of spiritual enlightenment is to

step out of this moral order. All life and all desire are evil and they must be completely transcended in order to reach an ineffable state of the absolute called *nirvana* in which there is no life, no distinctions, no individualities. It is not the trans-valuation of all values but the utter and ultimate negation of them. What is left to man in Buddhism is mercy as the whole of morality and *nirvana* as the end which he refused to define, because, as Spinoza said, all definition is limitation and *nirvana* is the transcendence of all limitations. We have nothing positive left except the relief of suffering and abstention from killing in any form. It is a poor substitute for belief in the values of life and is an extremely inane ethics which exalts the life-negating *bhikshu* as a model man who engages in no pursuit of life.

As such a negation of life and its values could not hold the human mind for long, nor could it hold society together; later on certain positive ends were justified and pursued. In a humanised form it produced many good results as we see in the laws and administration of Asoka. It was only by being inconsistent with its fundamentals that Buddhism could act as a morally uplifting force.

Christianity too drifted into certain life-fleeing trends. Buddhism as well as Christianity developed monkery and asceticism. The man who married and engaged in the lawful pursuits of life was considered to be less spiritual than the man who abstained from them. The world and the flesh were condemned. St. Paul said it was better to marry than to burn, meaning thereby burning for fornication or adultery which would result if the church prohibited marriage to all. If this danger were not there, celibacy would be spiritually the only desirable condition. This is also the Hindu and Buddhistic view. The celibate *sadhu* or *bhikshu* is considered to be more spiritual, having avoided the contamination of the flesh. Neitzshe was right when he said

religions are of two kinds: those that say yes to life and those that say no to life. Asceticism is saying no to life. It is flight from life, to save one's soul.

This was the universally accepted view of spirituality and morality when Islam came on the scene of history. Heaven was separated from earth and spirituality was divorced from morality as well as life. The ideal man was the hermit, alone with his God, who, finding the world too much, had escaped from it and praised God in solitude. Islam found religion and morality divorced from life and its greatest contribution to the advancement of humanity is the conception of religion as well-being, as life well lived with love and justice, fulfilling all the demands of human nature within the limits prescribed by reason and social well-being. With Islam, the purpose of life is better and richer life, intensely and completely lived, and harmoniously developed.

ETHICS OF INTEGRATION

There are more points of contact and fewer points of difference between Greek and Islamic ethics. In Islam, the religious development of the Hebrews and the rational development of the Hellenes seem to have converged. On the surface, these lines of development appear to be the antithesis of each other. For the Greeks, ultimate reality is pure, self-thinking reason, and the Hebraic God is primarily a moral will. One might say that the one is static and the other is dynamic; one is speculative and the other is practical. Hegel, one of the greatest philosophers of all times, based his entire concept of existence on the idea of a dialectical movement of thought in nature and mind, moving from a thesis towards antithesis, and then towards a synthesis which takes up the abiding value of both and comprehends both by transcending their onesideness. The Greeks had gradually discovered the logos which makes and regulates nature. In this gifted people, reason, inherent in

life and nature, had become self-conscious. But the reason that they discovered was a static reality and nature was dynamic. Reason was will-less and was its own object and end. Plato and Aristotle, therefore, both reached the conclusion that the highest reality was idea or reason and the changing world is created by the mixture of illusion and non-being with reason which is only partially reflected in things. All particularity and individuality were changing, transient and illusory. God does nothing but contemplate His own being; He does not bother with particulars and individuals, and, as a matter of fact, He does not know them. It is intrinsically impossible for God to know the particulars because the particulars are constituted by a mixture of non-being, and God is pure being.

Now in the language of Hegelian dialectic, if we consider this rationalism as a thesis, then the Hebraic concept of God is an antithesis. Hebraic God is pre-eminently a will directed by purposes. For the Greeks, will was almost a negation of eternal reason because there is nothing unrealised in reason which it has to realise by willing. As we have stated already, the will of Jehovah is conceived during a long course of development as very tribal, very anthropomorphic and very crude. In a number of cases, dealing with his enemies, Jehovah shows great cruelty and irrational wrath, visiting the sins of a man on three generations of his progeny. This will is gradually moralised, rationalised and universalised till we reach Christ who conceived of God primarily as love. Now, love is not an attribute of the intellect; it is a quality of feeling and will. We can say, therefore, that the Hebraic development at its culmination in Christ presents us with a willing God who is not an eternally static reality but is a doer of deeds and a rewarder of deeds. Among the Hebrews, whether we take Abraham or Christ, we find theism exalted and purified. In this line of development there is less emphasis on reason and

knowledge and more stress on virtue and on the gradually expanding idea of justice and love.

Both of these conclusions were partial and one-sided and the world needed an ideology or a religion that should synthesise the truth of both. This was exactly the task performed by Islam. It presented the idea of ultimate reality as God that was dynamic reason, a willing reason, Whose essence is goodness or love and Who is an active worker Himself both in nature and man. From the point of view of Greek intellectualism, a willing God is not conceivable. They had made ideas eternally static and did not know how to make them move themselves or the world. But the development of pragmatism in modern philosophy and the creative evolution of Bergson have brought forth the dynamic aspect of ideas into prominence. As William James says, every real idea has a direct or indirect reference to action, and an idea that has no reference to action has no meaning. Reality is changing, creative and dynamic. God is essentially a creator and reason is a derivative from the will. This is very nearly the point of view adopted by Islam. The Qur'an repeatedly points as a rationally and causally ordered whole; every phenomenon of nature is a miracle which points to a rational creator. 'Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that sail upon the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it (all kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand' (ii. 164). The Qur'an calls itself not a book of sermons or hymns but a book of wisdom, and at every step, when it enunciates a principle, it gives reasons for it and every exhortation ends with the words `and why don't you reflect?' It is said that it is the men of knowledge

who guard against evil. Then about wisdom it is said that it is the greatest of God's gifts. 'And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good' (ii. 269); 'And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure and in your own souls (too); will you not then see?' (li. 20-21). It is reason, justice and goodness all in one that are repeatedly pointed out as a basis for belief in God and for direction in action. It is the synthesis of Hellenism and Hebraism; reason becomes a creative goodwill.

The Muslims are called in the Qur'an 'the nation of the middle course.' It is a very significant designation. Before Islam there had been great nations that had hit at great truths but they had gone to extremes in their one-sided development. The Hindus had developed the idea of ultimate reality to transcendental monism and absolutism but had lost touch with life. It was a partial truth; God does transcend all the changes, relativities and particularities of existence; He transcends all that we can possibly think or imagine about Him. He is the beyond of beyond. But the Qur'an says, He is also the nearest of the near. In transcendental absolutism human soul was identified with God, as the real self of all selves but the individual must lose his individuality and identity to merge in God. In strict consistency there is no merger because the individual never really existed. So the transcendence of God and the potential divinity of man both took a turn that led to the negation of life resulting in quietism and asceticism and the belief that God could be realised by the individual in his solitary contemplation cut away from all relation with life. All this was exaggeration of truths and extremism. The truths of these concepts were taken up by Islam and incorporated in a complete harmony with other aspects of life. We find Islam following a middle path and synthesising all these truths. It is one of the oft-repeated theses of the Qur'an that all great religions of civilised humanity were

essentially true but were later on perverted. We see, historically, how this perversion takes place. It is the exaggeration of partial truths to the extent that they begin to impoverish life instead of enriching it.

We find some creeds in which there is complete identification of God with the universe. For instance, Stoicism, which flourished for centuries in the Roman Empire and whose beautiful expression we find in pious souls like Marcus Aurelius, identified God with the universe. It was a doctrine of complete immanence. The universe was the body of God and God was the soul of the universe. This was also a step towards truth but the idea of God was degraded and, in a way, finitised. Islam says that the creator is there in His creation but He is more than that, as the artist is always more than the products of his art, though every artistic creation is an objectification of his inspiration and urge. The `nation of the middle course' was asked to believe in ultimate reality called God, both as transcendent and as immanent: He is reason as well as will, and the highest manifestation of will is love, mercy or beneficence which is revealed in a creative urge which not only creates but orders creation rationally in order to sustain, cherish and develop it; death and decay too are moments in the great creative process.

There is a beautiful and extremely pregnant verse which we find in the Bible as well as in the Qur'an. It says, vicious men are those who cut asunder what God has joined. This verse has been narrowly interpreted both by Biblical theologians and by the commentators of the Qur'an; they lost sight of its deep significance. The Biblical theologians interpreted it as prohibiting divorce; marriage being a sacrament in which God had joined man and wife, it is sinful to cut it asunder. Similarly, Muslim theologians interpreted it in terms of simple legality. To me it appears

that it contains the essence of all true religion and all true morality and its application extends to all sorts of social, political, and economic relations. All nature is one because its creator is one; everything is connected with everything else closely or remotely. There was a time when nature was cut asunder into high and low, into God-favoured and God-forsaken spheres. The ancients considered the heavens to be inhabited by gods and the stars were worshipped as gods. The sublunar world was a world of change and decay; the world must be despised so that heaven may be worshipped. Islam struck at the root of this division of nature and pointed out to all natural phenomena from heavens to the earth in the same breath and in the same strain, as all equally manifesting the power and beneficence of God and all exhibiting a rational order. The law that makes the planets move regularly in their orbits also makes the blade of grass grow; both phenomena are equally divine and equally miraculous. Those who understand these phenomena need no other miracle to believe in a good and rational creator and 'those who want wonders to convince them would not believe in spite of them, calling them hallucination or magic'. Islam joined again the aspects of nature that had been cut asunder by man but were united in God, the ultimate reality.

Then we have the naturalists who believe in nature only, and the transcendental theists who believe in a God who is indifferent to nature or even despises it, as we find monks in the Middle Ages despising all nature, including their bodies as things concerned with the devil, the world and the flesh, which were indentified. Similarly, we find in India, Hindu asceticism despising all natural instincts. God and nature were completely cut asunder. It was Islam which divinised nature again and presented it as the most obvious testimony of a rational and creative love.

As external nature was cut asunder into heaven and earth, the realm of light and the realm of darkness, the realm of God and the realm of the devil, so man's own nature was split into soul and body, spirit and flesh, reason and instinct. The root of all asceticism is this split. Man was considered to be a meeting-point of God and the devil, where his body and instincts represented the devil. The body and all physical desires must be completely suppressed. The organic unity of mind and body, called man, was thus vivisected, deadening both parts. Islam came to the rescue of man even in this respect, it sanctified all his instincts, but prescribing the limits of their functions; they have not to be completely suppressed but regulated and controlled. All ascetic practices which injure or torture the body or cause unnecessary pain were prohibited. The Qur'an praises the Christian ascetics for their love of God and their turning to Him in preference to the world, but says that they have drifted on a wrong path and have not understood the nature of that asceticism which lives the simple life, at the same time engaging in all the normal activities of life. Moral injunctions are called in the Qur'an `the limits of God'; the exercise of instincts has to be limited and controlled in the interests of personal and social well-being. Instincts form the dynamics of life, and the way of spirituality is the canalising of these forces into proper channels. It is the thesis of the Qur'an that God has created nothing in vain, our instincts and emotions were given us for special purposes and every one of them has a prescribed function. Man is an indivisible whole; his body is an organic unity, so is his mind, and mind and body together form a higher unity. Man would be committing a wrong if he cut asunder his reason from his instincts, or his body from his spirit. The interaction of body and mind is a fact of experience, however unintelligible it may be for our theoretical reason. Every event in our body affects and modifies the processes

of our mind and every passing idea or feeling reverberates in the whole organism whether we are conscious of it or not. Islam preached and practised again the maxim of a sound mind in a sound body which a perverted religiosity had forgotten to such an extent that the medieval monks thought it sinful to have a bath and lice were called the pearls of God, who must be allowed to multiply in the body and in the clothes. It is not reported how many monks and nuns died of typhus. Rough-hair shirts were worn as undergarments in order to make the body feel uncomfortable so that the spirit may be nourished. Hindu ascetic practices were still worse. It was one of the great services of Islam to humanity that it exploded the idea of this kind of spirituality and made it a duty to keep body and clothes perfectly clean, without which prayers could not be offered. Man's life is more than physical, but body is the instrument of the spirit. The superstructure of human and divine values has to be raised on a physical substratum. All instincts have their functions as well as their rights; all of them must function within limits so that none of them tresspasses on the rights of others. What is prohibited is transgression and not the functioning of instincts. Morality is nothing but their right functioning; if they are suppressed virtue becomes empty.

Islam is a religion of complete integration. For the first time in history we see the doctrine of the development of the whole man in complete integration with himself, with society and with nature, and the whole integration based on belief in a single creator who is the unity of all existence. Being is graded but all grades are teleologically and organically related. The doctrine of the unity of humanity is repeatedly presented in the Qur'an. 'Be careful of your duty to God your Lord, Who created you from a single being' (iv.I). This is the doctrine of the unity and slolidarity of humanity, whose 'division into tribes and nations has no

other purpose except as a means of recognition'. For the first time in history tribalism and nationalism were abolished as sources of hostile divisions. All civilised humanity was invited to believe in a common purpose and live for it. Salvation or well-being was extended to all good men, irrespective of race or nation or secondary differences in rituals and conventions. All those who believed in one good God and led virtuous lives formed essentially one people who need not quarrel with one another about difference in details. This is given as the minimum of a common basis for civilised humanity. Islam not only preached it as a counsel of perfection but practised it and instituted a new social order; it gave the chance of enjoying equal rights to the Arab and the non-Arab, to the Jew and the Gentiles, to the negro, the downtrodden, and the outcasts of all nations.

Man is first integrated as an individual, by striving for harmony between his instincts and reason and then he is harmonised with the social group in which he lives; ultimately all social groups must be unified by belief in morality and the unity of the ideal — God.

The Muslims in their later history developed a narrow orthodoxy which kept the door of international brotherhood open only for those who entered the brotherhood of Islam and gradually ceased to extend the hand of brotherhood to the followers of other creeds. Islam considers only polytheism as the root of all evil which degrades man and God and disrupts humanity by numerous hostile objects of worship. Polytheism is not a mere metaphysical belief, harmless to hold as a speculative hypothesis; it cuts into the lives of those who hold it. It makes them superstitious and lowers their morality and stands in the way of personal and social unity and well-being. Polytheists, worshippers of natural forces and imaginary deities, which according to the Qur'an are illusory

creations of their own desires, are considered to be subhuman but even they may live in peace if they allow others to live in peace. All others, who believe in one God and one morality for all, are invited to work in peace and amity for common human aims, and salvation is the reward of all such persons. 'Surely those who believe (i.e. who have joined the Muslim community) and those who are Jews and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve' (ii. 62).

There have arisen many creeds in modern times, claiming to be creeds of humanity, which could bring together all the good people of the earth, irrespective of their national or conventional differences. August Comte, the French philosopher, during the last century preached such a creed, where humanity was to be worshipped in place of God, who had been deposed by reason and nature. Those who had done any good to humanity in advancing it morally or culturally were to be called saints of humanity. In imitation of the Catholic Church, he also made a calender of saints assigning different days to different saints of humanity, for contemplation and remembrance. He believed that godless humanity was enough; why bother about God who does not exist? He gathered a few followers for some time and then the creed died out, making no appeal to the deeprooted instincts of man. Like many similar creeds it was still-born. Then we meet with Bahaism which has added nothing to the essentials of Islam except a new prophet who also preaches the unity of God and unity of all religions. It is hailed as a new revelation but there is nothing new about it. Islam teaches that there can be nothing new about the essentials of revelation. The essential truth of the unity of God and love and justice to man have been preached by all great religions and by all prophets. Whenever the Qur'an

talks of essentials, it says you will find them in the scriptures of all religions. Islam claims no originality and yet historically it is something very original. The belief in one God had been corrupted all over the world: pure theism was almost extinct. The belief had rusted all over and Islam removed that rust, so that it may shine forth again in all its pristine effulgence. This in itself is a service to humanity of capital importance. `Allah is one, Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten and none is like Him' (cxii. 1-4). He is not incarnated in any one being or even in the entire universe; He is beyond all limitations that we attribute to Him. He is the invisible but abiding source of all life, all power and all values.

The being of God, notwithstanding complete transcendence, is by knowledge and power immanent in entire nature and in the soul of man. All the three form an integral whole. The teaching of this integration makes the contribution of Islam original. The worshippers of reason as an ultimate reality were there before Islam; the identifiers of the universe with God were also there like the stoics. The preachers of utter transcendence like the neo-Platonists and the Vedantists had also swayed a large portion of humanity. The concept of God as a moral arbiter had also been developed by the Jews. Moral principles were also not invented by Islam; morality had always been the concomitant of civilised humanity as is evidenced by the term *ma'ruf* used by the Qur'an for virtue. It means 'the well-known and the obvious'. When the human soul is uncorrupted, virtue is the most obvious thing for it; the prophets and the philosophers did not invent it. When Islam came on the scene, all these aspects of truth had been corrupted or abstracted and life had lost its wholeness; but only the whole is wholesome. Men had cut asunder what God had joined and the main service of Islam was to reunite the sundered parts again. Islam was not eclecticism, only

juxtaposing truths separately developed and preached; it was an organic unity; it was a creative synthesis. When you look to the parts only that Islam united, there seems to be nothing original in Islam; it can be justly claimed about every part that it was separately preached and practised by others. But when you come to the integration of those parts, the originality of Islam emerges as a creative synthesis, and a great step forward in evolution.

Let me point out another phase of social life in which great sundering, detrimental to social life, had taken place. All religions had developed priesthood; the men who were supposed to know the mysteries of religion and were initiated into the intricacies of ritual were a class apart, greatly venerated and worshipped. No function of life could be complete without the participation of these agents who were mediators between gods or God and men. According to these creeds, as there could be no direct approach to God, these intermediaries and intercessionists had a great hold on the souls of the ignorant, and held them in awe. Religion had become the monopoly of a class of exploiters. The *bhikshus,* the *sadhus,* the *jogis,* the Brahmans and the Christian priests were the monopolists of spirituality; they held in their hands the keys of heaven and hell because they only had access to the supernatural! Religion had been taken away from the everyday life of the people and deposited with the priestly class. This segregation of religion from life had divided society into watertight compartments, with the result that the priesthood as well as the laity were corrupted. Society is an organism, different parts of which God has joined; when society splits up into classes, the organism begins to lose health and finally every part decays.

Islam abolished priesthood altogether. The message of God was there for everybody to read and recite and hear and practise every day. God says, 'Call Me and I answer';

'We are nearer you than your life-vein' (1.16). No intermediary is necessary and no abracadabra of ritual is required. You have to assume postures of respect and humility, submit your soul wholly to God and pray to be guided on the right path. That is all that Islam requires of man. Where is the need of the religious experts here who should be pampered as a superior class? In a congregational prayer whoever is the best and the most learned of you let him lead the prayers. Racially he may be a negro and, as to age, he may be a child. The world before Islam had no conception of a classless society; whenever visitors or messengers from other lands came to look at Muslim society as created by the Prophet, the fact that struck them and astonished them most was its classlessness. A Roman messenger to the Prophet, on his return to his country, reported that the most curious thing about the Muslims was that during the night in their prayers they became monks, and during the day they became soldiers and cavaliers. He could not conceive of men who could possibly combine these two functions. So the dignity of all professions was established and castes based on high or low work were abolished. The first successor of the Prophet, the great and gentle Abu Bakr, after having been elected as Caliph, was seen by 'Umar the Great carrying bundles of cloth on his shoulders. He used to live by that trade. 'Umar told him he could not carry on this trade and at the same time administer a great realm; but Abu Bakr replied that he had to support his family. 'Umar implored him to accept an allowance from the public treasury to which he agreed, stipulating that it should be just sufficient for the simple needs of food and clothing. A number of great men in Islam, and learned scholars and theologians, followed ordinary professions which a Greek or a Roman or a Hindu would have considered beneath him as menial work. All occupations were open to all and no stigma attached to any profession.

This re-establishing of social unity and equality was the reunion of those functions which God had joined but men had cut asunder before Islam.

'Let not men cut asunder what God had joined' (ii 27). We now follow this text further into other spheres of social life. God had joined the life of the two sexes to cooperate in the birth and bringing up of every child, male or female. The proudest of men are born of women and the noblest man, whether Christ or Muhammad, is the son of a woman. The Prophet once saw a person somewhat awed by his presence. He promptly said, `Be at ease, I am the son of a woman'. Before Islam, woman all over the world had lost her independent status. She was legally considered as a chattel along with other goods and cattle. She could not own property in her own right and had no share in inheritance. In the patriarchal system, which prevailed over the major part of the civilised world, an unmarried girl was under the complete legal control of the father. After marriage this control passed over to the husband and, on the death of the hushand, her own son became her guardian. At no age or stage and under no condition was she allowed to have a right to direct her own life or own any property in her own name. She could be given away in marriage or concubinage without her consent and against her will. The Islamic code is the first legal code to confer equal civil rights on woman. She has the right to own property in her own name and the right to choose her husband. The right of separation from a husband, who proves himself morally, economically or physically unfit, is also granted to her by Islam. Marriage is made a contract in which both parties can insert any lawful condition, on the non-observance of which marriage is to be nullified, and the parties set free to marry again. The critics of Islam say that the permission of polygamy and the easy divorce do injustice to women. This adverse criticism is due partly to ignorance of the Qur'anic

injunctions and partly to the misuse of this permission by individuals over whom decadent Muslim states had neither the power nor desire to exercise any control. It is unfair to malign a law because of its misuse, whether generally or in particular cases. Polygamy in Islamic society has always been exceptional. I think, it may be safely asserted, that at no time in Muslim history was polygamy practised by more than one or two per cent. Because of almost equal proportion of women to men in all societies, legal polygamy can never be a general social institution, though illegal promiscuity is possible in various degrees, as we find in some savage societies, or its growing prevalence in some highly civilised countries of the West. Islam prohibits polygamy where injustice is feared to a wife or her children. If injustice could be proved, the permission to have a second wife could be legally withheld by the court. If there are just reasons demanding the taking of a second wife, as, for instance, the desire for offspring or extreme ill-health of the first wife, then there are only two alternatives: completely discarding the first wife and ruining her life for no fault of her own or keeping her also as a properly supported wife along with the second one. A discarded wife is, more often than not, morally or economically ruined. As Bernard Shaw said somewhere, a sensible woman would prefer to have half a husband than no husband at all. If the first wife is treated unjustly and discrimination is made against her in vital matters, she can enforce her rights in the court; if the court is a truly Islamic court she can have her wrongs redressed. Justice is a indispensable condition of the exceptional permission for polygamy, without which it is unlawful. The Qur'an warns people against polygamy as a highly probable source of injustice.

The law of marriage and divorce promulgated by Islam was far ahead of any legislation in this respect in any contemporary creed or nation. The Hindus allowed no

divorce nor did the Christians, which entailed untold domestic unhappiness and had dire social consequences. When, at last, the Christian nations saw the necessity of divorce, the conditions attached to securing it were so ridiculous that the benefit of it was overweighed by mendacity and collusion and the lawyer's fees, the shame and expenses being unbearable by the average citizen. The Prophet said that the most disagreeable of things permitted by God to man is divorce; therefore all attempts should be made to avoid it, if possible. Friends and relations must intervene to secure reconciliation. The man contemplating divorce must be given sufficient time to revise his decision and it could only be ratified and made final on repeated expressions of his decision after specific intervals. But when he has finally made up his mind he need not go to lawyers and courts and fabricate false charges to sully his own reputation or the honour of his wife. No dirty linen must be washed in public. The woman too can seek divorce if she proves the inability of the husband to perform his duties as a husband. In her case the court must step in to help her if she cannot secure the divorce by mutual consent. She being a weaker and economically dependent sex, the law court must come to her aid. If she can prove any injustice to herself she must be helped. The Prophet granted a woman's request for divorce even on the basis of extreme incompatibility of temperament. Some great thinkers of the West are still arguing to secure this right to women which Islam gave them fourteen hundred years ago.

All the civilised nations have been struggling for more than a century to approximate their laws of marriage and divorce to the Islamic law, and women in all non-Islamic nations are striving hard to secure the right of owning property in their own names and inheriting it. Till recently the English law did not recognise the right of the wife to own property in her own name. In English law, the

hasband and wife were considered as one person, but that one person was the husband. The daughter in her father's house was legally considered to be a servant and, when she was enticed away or abducted, the father sued the enticer for 'having deprived him of the services of his daughter'. The Hindu code too is being revised to bring it nearer the Islamic law; Hindu orthodoxy and conservatism blame the reformers that they want to make Hindu society Islamic in the proposed legislation about marriage and divorce and by granting the right of inheritance to daughters. As already stated, the beautiful verse in the Bible and the Qur'an about 'not sundering what God had joined' was wrongly interpreted by Christians as prohibiting divorce under all circumstances. In Islam only the married couple that lives in peace and amity and performs willingly the duties assigned to it has been joined by God because God is love and unity and concord. Where there is irremediable discord, God is not there, and, therefore, if such an ill-wedded couple is separated, it is not sundering what God had joined. This was the view adopted by Islam and this is the most rational view. Married life should be based on love and duty; if love is not there or if it was once there but it has ceased to be, and if the situation of the character of one or both prevents the performance of duties, or thwarts good companionship, it is necessary for personal and social well-being that such a couple should be separated in their own interest and for the welfare of society in general.

Islam means peace, and a Muslim home must be a peaceful home. Any element that disrupts this peace must be eliminated. It was the non-violent Christ who laid down the law that 'if thy right eye ails thee take it out'. In considering the law of divorce, why did not Christians and upon this maxim? Christ too wanted peace and, therefore, enunciated this principle. Where cure by food and medicine does not avail, man does resort to surgical operation. Why should

surgical operation be prohibited in the case of the ailments of the social organism? Society should be constituted of peaceful and dutiful families; where peace and duty become impossible the family unit must be lawfully and peacefully broken up so that its elements may seek peace in new unities and try other sources of harmony in other spheres.

We have briefly commented on the text that virtue consists in not sundering what God has joined, and tried to show how Islam attempted integration everywhere; God and nature, body and soul, reason and instinct, law and love were all integrated by Islam. Their sundering had corrupted religion and society everywhere and it was only their integration which could restore personal and social health. The sudden spread of Islam over half the civilised world, recasting human cultures everywhere and leading the world in knowledge and culture for centuries, appears to be a miracle of history. The secret of this miracle was the creative synthesis of Islam and its integration of elements of truth that having been sundered had lost their value and vitality.

CHARACTER

The most important thing about man is his outlook on life or, what you may broadly call, his philosophy. In this sense even a shepherd has a philosophy. Outlooks issue into acts, and if a man acts habitually in a certain manner this constitutes his character. So one could also say that the most important thing about a person is his character. Character is a complete system constituted by acts of will of a particular kind; it is the habitual dominance of a certain universe of desire. Accidental dominance of a good or a bad purpose in a man's life in particular situations does not constitute his character. Character is the establishment of a continuously dominant outlook, issuing in habitual actions of a particular complexion. Character is the ground of

conduct, and conduct generally is an expression of character under the limitations of circumstances, though there may be much in a man's character which finds little or no expression in overt acts. Character ultimately becomes a man's nature; it may be partly his original nature and partly nature nurtured by habits. It is ultimately habits that form a man's character. Someone had aptly said, `Sow an act and reap a habit sow a habit and reap a character and sow a character and reap a destiny'. Character ultimately becomes a man's destiny which he finds it difficult, nay impossible, to escape. Circumstances are his opportunities of action; for some time there is an interplay of character and circumstances, each modifying each, but once the character is firmly set, circumstances assume a secondary importance and man carries his destiny with him in all stituations of life. After that no change of circumstances would repair a defect of character. Even Heraclitus, the great philosopher of change, characterised character as destiny. Character then becomes what you are in the open and what you are in the dark; what you are when you act and what you are when you are not acting. It becomes the governing element of life.

Cultures and religions are to be judged by the type of character they tend to build. A tree is known by its fruit and the fruit of a culture is the character of its men and women. A culture may be judged by the noblest characters that it produces; it cannot be judged by its criminals, delinquents or perverts. Or you may judge a culture by the average character that it produces, by its general trends.

We must analyse the conception of character which Islam presents before its votaries. We must repeat here that Islamic ethics is not a purely secular ethics. According to Islam, morality is rooted in the being of God and in belief in Him. Therefore whenever the Qur'an talks of the ideal man, it starts with him as a believer in a beneficent reality which

creates and sustains the values of life. The Qur'an considers it to be a fundamental and all-sufficient belief, from which all knowledge and all virtue will follow as corollaries. Philosophically considered, belief in God is really a belief in the moral order and the objectivity of moral values. Merely secular morality has no roots in reality; it is a hot-house plant or a potted seedling. Huxley, in his *Romance Lectures*, pleaded for a secular morality which is an ephemeral product of human life, faced with a morally indifferent or even ethically hostile universe. He asked us to be virtuous and brave in the sight of a cruel and value-destroying cosmos. How many of us can have the heart to be virtuous, knowing full well that both virtue and vice will end in smoke? Islamic ethics is based on the belief that all intrinsic values—truth, goodness, beauty and happiness—are noumenal realities and not phenomenal illusions. God is the guarantee of the moral order, and in the sphere of creation we are asked to be His co-workers.

There has been a great discussion in philosophical ethics about the relation of knowledge to character The first great philosophical moralist, Socrates, preached that virtue is knowledge and vice is ignorance. He who possesses true knowledge of the good must necessarily do good; the vicious are really ignorant people who mistake evil for good and pursue it because they consider it to be good: nobody pursues evil knowing it to be evil; he somehow visualises it as good. Aristotle, later on, criticised this doctrine and said that virtue is knowledge *plus* habit; knowledge alone has not power enough to make a man virtuous.

Now, knowledge or belief, according to the accepted Islamic doctrine, is of various grades. Socrates and Plato had differentiated between knowledge and opinion, but the Islamic gradation appears to me to be more scientific and realistic. Belief is graded as *`ilm al-yaqin* (intellectual

knowledge), *'ayn al-yaqin* (perceptual knowledge) and *haqq al-yaqin* (realised or experienced knowledge). These are three different grades of certainty. Intellectual knowledge is reached by logical conclusions and all psychologists now agree that, as a sufficient motive of action, it is very weak and uncertain; a contrary strong argument may shake it to its foundation at any moment. Mere intellectual conclusions as motives of action may make Hamlets of us all, casting the pale hue of thought on all our springs of action, and paralysing us at crucial moments of decision. Rumi says about intellectual beliefs that the logicians have wooden legs, not fit to walk steadily or straight. Most of man's intellectual beliefs are of this nature and the conviction that they create is of the weakest kind. About merely speculative knowledge the Qur'an says that it is only surmises and guesses about the nature of God and `conjecture will not avail aught against the truth' (x.36)

So, as a basis of the formation of character and for the creation of a stable and dominant universe of desire, mere opinion or speculative knowledge is of little avail. The next higher grade of certainty is perceptual knowledge. We see certain happenings in external nature or in the lives of others and form certain beliefs about good and evil. If our perceptive experience is wide enough we may learn a good deal from events that do not happen to us directly. This may form a slightly better guide and motive of action in comparison with mere intellectual apprehensions. But there is a higher and final grade of certainty which is called realisation. We have all seen it so many times in our lives that when life makes us experience the truths that we had been hearing and also perceiving in others, we feel as if their reality is revealed to us for the first time. The whole tone and tenor of this type of certainty is quite distinct; we are then knowing reality in its fulness not from outside but from the inmost core of our own being. This is knowledge

at the highest which becomes identical with life and action. So the basis of a man's character is really this last type of knowledge which you might call his outlook on life or his philosophy of life. It is sometimes said that every character is dominated by some ruling passion which subordinates all other desires to itself. But we must push the analysis a little further and ask how different persons develop different ruling passions. Ultimately it is a question of values; whoever values a thing above everything else generates in himself a passion for it which subordinates every aspect of life to itself. Value-judgments are judgements of belief about the nature of reality and what it contains which is worth striving for and worth realising. A miser develops love for money for its own sake and not as a means to the purchasing of necessities or luxuries of life; for him it becomes an intrinsic value and it is not instrumental to anything beyond itself. It may be a very perverted outlook on life, but it becomes a firm belief which becomes a ruling passion. It is sometimes lightly asserted that beliefs do not matter and it is actions that are important; but this is psychologically wrong. Man, as he is constituted, acts not merely from momentary impulses; behind his conduct there is an outlook on life which may not be definitely formulated in words, but it is all the same there working consciously and subconsciously as his vital urge, as a driving force of his life, determining his relations to other persons and to his evironment.

This explains why Islam insists on a fundamental belief being the most vital thing in a man's life; it is his fundamental belief which will ultimately determine his character. The type of character that Islam wants to develop will finally depend upon the fundamental belief that it considers to be the most real and the most valuable. Its basic faith is that God or ultimate reality is one. It is a rational and conscious creative will. It is infinite knowledge

as well as infinite power. As we have substantiated copiously from the Qur'anic verses, the dominant attribute of this reality is love or goodness. God is a guarantee of the moral order and He is a preserver of all values. With Him are infinite stores of everything; there is nothing outside His infinite knowledge and power but He creates with a definite measure and according to set plans which He does not vary arbitrarily. Life as seen, perceived and experienced is a fragment of the great unseen, but the unseen does not contradict the seen; it is a graded continuation of it. God is the unity of all unities and the harmony of all harmonies. His are the most excellent names (lix.24), that is to say, He is the transcendental locus of all intrinsic and abiding values. All nature is His creation and hence embodies His attributes in varying degrees. All nature is one in one way and all humanity is one in another manner. The study of nature in general and human nature in particular is urged as a necessary function and duty of a rational being because the deeper his study the more he will be convinced of its order and rationality and adaptation to ends.

From this study and this belief will follow a particular conception of virtue. Everything in nature fulfils its function and, as the Qur'an says, 'willingly or unwillingly,' it has to submit. In nature as nature there is no evil; as the Qur'an asks us to turn our eyes to it repeatedly and our sight will come back to us exhausted without having found a flaw. As it is a fundamental belief of science that there is causation everywhere and chaos has no existence, so Islam says there is beneficent order everywhere; 'the mercy of the Lord covers everything'. Wherever there is rational love, there can be no chaos. Some things in nature appear evil to us because of our limited outlook or because we view nature anthropomorphically; otherwise, from the point of view of God's universal knowledge and power, there is no evil.

There is no natural evil but there certainly exists moral evil as a result of the gift of freewill to man. Freedom is a double-edged instrument. Man, as the highest of creation, was gifted with God's attribute of freedom which creates for him, however, the alternative of rising above the rest of creation by freely attuning his will to the will of God, or by revolting against Him and thereby sinking to the lowest depths of degradation. According to Islam, there is no character except that which is in tune with the eternal verities, and life lived according to the highest ideal creates the most harmonised character. Virtue which follows from belief, as stated above, is the surest guarantee of well-being, which, however, is not to be judged hedonistically by a calculus of physical pleasures and pains or material losses or gains in this short span of life. Even here, living on the physical plane, man is more than his body and man's success or failure is not to be judged in terms of lower planes of existence only. Man wants to succeed, but his ideals of success are often mere idols.

The Qur'an teaches that in every grade of existence there is a different law of success. He who hankers after the worldly goods and devotes his whole personality to their attainment shall surely amass worldly goods; they shall be granted to him according to the laws of a lower nature, but the man will deprive himself of abiding values. From the point of view of the ideal, such a man has failed miserably. A beautiful short sura of the Qur'an puts it most pithily: 'I swear by the Time, most surely man is in loss except those who believe and do good deeds and enjoin on each other patience' (ciii. 1-3). We have elucidated briefly what Islam means by faith, which should form the basis of life. It is faith in the unity of reality which includes physical and supra-physical nature. Consequently it is a faith in the unity and solidarity of humanity which the Qur'an enunciates by saying that all humanity is created out of one being or soul

and 'Whoever slays a human being unless it be for manslaughter or mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men and whoever saves the life of one, it is as though he kept alive all men' (v. 32). As a corollary to this belief an individual as a human being exists only as an integral part of a social organism; the injury to one part is an injury to the whole. A man who has developed this outlook on life has, according to Islam, got hold of the fundamental truth. The more firmly he realises it, the more surely it will determine his character and conduct. All egoism, therefore, is false and self-destructive; it will tend to destroy society and the egoist himself shall be encompassed by the ruin.

We must again turn to the vital question which was hotly disputed among the great Greek philosophers and has created problems throughout the ages. Is faith or knowledge enough to determine a man's character? Don't we know that there are people who believe and still do wrong? The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Even the life of a believing man is often a pendulum swinging between violation and repentance. We have already discussed the gradations of belief in the terms of the holy Book. What is meant to be brought out here is the distinctive Qur'anic doctrine that faith is tested as well as strengthened by good deeds. According to Islam, faith is not something which is either there or not there at all; the strength of it varies in different persons. The highest kind of faith, which is direct perception of truth and reality and which may be called complete self-realisation, in which the ideal is completely perceived and assimilated by an individual, is a rare gift of God vouchsafed to few. The vision of truth, that absorbs the whole of personality and in which the finite is completely taken up by the infinite, may be the permanent state of some great prophets and saints, but the average mortal falls far below it. For most of us, the vision of truth comes in flashes of lightning but soon leaves us in darkness again. As the

Qur'an addresses human beings in general, it knows how weak human faith is unless it is strengthened. by good deeds. When Socrates said that virtue is knowledge, or when the Prophet of Islam said that a deep and sincere faith in God is enough for salvation, they were evidently referring to knowledge or belief at a very high and very deep level. If such a knowledge were there, a man's soul would surely be safe in all the vicissitudes of life.

The Qur'an seldom talks of faith except in conjunction with good deeds. The significance of this must be brought out in order to understand more clearly the spirit of Islam. The question is: From where do most people get their faith? Most generally it is from their parents that they get it or from their social environment. They believe in certain things because those in whom they have implicit faith believe those things to be true. This is the truth so clearly enunciated by the famous saying of the Prophet that every child is born only with the bare equipment of human nature and it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian. Such a faith, though vehemently professed outwardly, is really a very uncertain and superficial basis for creating a firm out-look on life or forming the basis of character. Such faiths sometimes work havoc in group prejudices and are very often sinister sources of human conflicts. It is not any life-experience that has produced these convictions. The faith of a man who has accepted it only as a social necessity is considered to be of a very weak order by the Qur'an. When Islam triumphed in Arabia politically, because freely and firmly believing followers of the Prophet had attained to power and made their liberties secure a horde of people from the four corners of the Peninsula began to pour in, to be incorporated in the triumphant body politic, assuring the Prophet that they too had become believers. The Qur'an asked the Prophet to tell them that they could not have become believers overnight;

the right thing for them would be to say that they had entered the pale of the Muslim brotherhood, promising to abide by its discipline; as to faith, in the proper sense, it is to be gradually acquired by right thinking and right living. As the Prophet said, 'knowledge comes by learning, and learning is a process, not an abrupt revelation of all truth'.

There is another small class of people who ponder over life and nature and strive to come to certain conclusions by a logical process. Freethinking, although claimed by many, is a very rare phenomenon. A man's original temperament gives him a bias; then there are prejudices unconsciously imbibed from society or from his studies. A man often deludes himself that he is freely pondering over life without any presumptions or prejudices, but he does not know how much his own habits or complexes or his national ambitions and cravings and certain ruling passions are diverting him from a direct approach to reality. If he acquires a faith motivated by these irrational factors, for Islam it has little value. Man should be trained to think things as they are, and it is one of the short prayers of the Prophet: 'O God! show me things as they are'. How difficult it is for man to know things as they are. So, convictions that are presumed to have been independently acquired but which in reality are the productional urges have no significance for religion.

But suppose, there is a man who is free from complexes and prejudices and is really a freethinker. He arrives intellectually at certain conclusions about the nature of life, and those conclusions also happen to be right. Is such ratiocinative approach to truth a sure and certain basis for the formation of character? Will such knowledge be necessarily embodied in the life activities of the thinker? In this respect Islam supports Aristotle against Socrates. If Socrates meant that virtue and knowledge are identical and

he who knows good must necessarily do the good, his psychology was defective. Aristotle corrected him and asserted that mere intellectual apprehension is not enough to materialise into virtue. For virtue to be perfect, there must surely be right apprehension; knowledge is the prerogative of man and no man's well-being is complete unless he has a background of true knowledge. But human mind is not pure reason; life has a physical basis too. We possess instincts that have to be trained and disciplined and subordinated to higher purposes. Then it is a fact that repeated actions sow habits, and habits, becoming as powerful as original nature, form the sum total of a man's character which becomes his inescapable destiny. Virtue then is habitaul action based on true beliefs about our life purpose, and virtue is knowledge *plus* habit.

Islam has supported Aristotle in this respect with its formulation of the essentials of faith and with its invariable coupling of good deeds with faith to test it as well as strengthen it. Faith ascends from certainty to certainty and from strength to strength with constant contemplation as well as perpetual embodiment of beliefs in good actions. 'Ayesha was asked as to what good deeds the Prophet liked most and she replied, 'The deeds that a man does habitually'. The Qur'an teaches that no man's faith is to be trusted unless he has been tested by deeds and has proved the sincerity of his convictions. Mere belief in certain dogmas or mysteries shall not deliver him from the clutches of his lower self; salvation is not attained merely by subscribing to any dogmas.

Chapter 11
WAR AND PEACE

Islam, the religion of peace, had to wage war to protect and establish itself. This has led to the vilification of Islam as a religion based on force and propagated by the sword. Whoever has studied the rise of Islam with the seer's insight, as Carlyle did, or without a sectarian bias as Gibbon and many others after him have done, can easily repudiate this charge. Islam was presented by a prophet who was socially, economically and politically a man without any worldly might. He and his followers were persecuted by all possible means for more than a decade before he began to use force against force to defend himself and the handful of his followers against ancient tribal savagery. He and his followers showed unparalleled patience and perseverance against heavy odds. They were deprived of all worldly goods, deprived of the means of securing their daily bread, exiled and made to flee from their homeland. No movemnt in history can show greater spirit of sacrifice and martyrdom. Even for a long time when they thought they were strong enough to hit back, they were restrained by the Prophet who was waiting for a time when they could succeed in their mission with the least possible bloodshed. They were striving to establish not only their own creed but general religious liberty, where everyone could follow his own convictions, provided that he did not directly disrupt the minimum bonds of a peaceful social order. If the Prophet had started preaching his doctrines with big battalions at his back and offering people the

alternative of conversion or the sword, one could rightfully say that Islam is a creed which spread at the point of the bayonet. But how could a creed, whose fundamental principle was that 'there ought to be no compulsion in religion', as the Qur'an has put explicitly, compel people by force to accept it? The simple question is: Where did these wielders of the sword come from? If the sword converted people to Islam, who converted the people who wielded the sword? Terrible force was used against the Prophet when he had no force except the force of truth and the force of his convictions. One by one his persecutors succumbed to his spiritual power. After accepting Islam, these erstwhile persecutors and new converts were persecuted by others. It is needless to paint a horrible picture of the atrocities that they suffered. For more than a decade Islam was extremely non-violent. Slowly and steadily, the number of the faithful increased, but the persecution continued and they were exiled. Then there came a time when they were left with only two alternatives: either to fight for their religious liberty or to perish. Who can blame Islam if it fought for its very existence?

The whole difficulty about understanding the place of war in life arises from the fact that religions like Buddhism and Christianity that had spread over a large part of civilised humanity before Islam, had, in theory at least, banned fighting or killing for any purpose or cause. Not only was human life never to be destroyed, it was a sin to kill even vermins, germs and poisonous insects. The ultimate purpose of all morality and spirituality is peace and non-violence, but this purpose had been misunderstood by religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity. The Buddhistic doctrine of *Ahimsa* or non-killing was unpracticable. All life feeds on life; the higher has no alternative but to live on the lower. As Rumi has put it, 'in the world everything is an eater and at the same time eaten'.

Buddhism aimed at the negation of life by the negation of all desire, including the desire to procreate, and, in strict consistency, not only human life but all existence must perish by practising strict *Ahimsa.* There are certain sects in India whose followers keep their mouths covered by cloth so that no visible or invisible insect or germ might enter it. The poor fellows do not know how many living beings they unconsciously devour during the day and the night. They consider it a sin to kill germs, lice, vermins, serpents, mosquitoes and all other pests. This is an attempt to live consistently with the doctrine of *Ahimsa* of Buddhism and Jainism. These deluded creatures do not realise that vegetable life is also life, and living on fruits and vegetables is devouring life only one step lower. On such doctrines man could not found a rational social order and he could not have existed at all.

Then we come to Christianity and the New Testament. Early Christians sincerely believed that Christ had prohibited war under all circumstances. There was no difference between a righteous and an unrighteous war, between a war of aggression and a war of defence. All war was banned by the New Dispensation. It was believed that Christ had prohibited all retaliation; evil was not to be resisted and only good was to be retuned for evil. The only right course for the true Christian was a quiet and patient martyrdom leaving the tyrant to the vengeance of the Lord. Prohibition of a forceful suppression of evil under all circumstances was a misinterpretation of the meaning of Christ. Love and non-violence go a long way towards the reformation of humanity and Christ rightfully laid great emphasis on them. But it was the same Christ who used the scourge against money-lenders in the courtyard of the Temple. If he had lived longer and the situation had worsened, his scourge might have been replaced by the sword. After all, it was he who said that he had brought not

peace but the sword. He might have said this at that time metaphorically but if he had ever been obliged to engage in a life-and-death struggle to protect himself and his creed of love, the metaphorical sword might have given place to an actual sword of steel. The historical situation did not develop during his lifetime so that he could put his convictions to the test or unfold the actual implications of hid doctrine. Later on, when Christianity was able to wield the worldly might, history shows how much sword it used; the use of it was justified by the teaching of Christ and sanctified by the High Pontiffs who considered themselves the inheritors of his love and truth, and who were supposed to be inspired by him or the Holy Ghost to wage righteous wars and set up Inquisitions. Even now, there are Christian sects and individual Christians who consider all war to be wrong and refuse to participate in it, believing that it is against the teaching of Christ. Some of them had to be sent to prison during World War I. They call themselves Conscientious Objectors.

Islam preached and practised a rational doctrine of war. Most of the wars waged later on by Muslim rulers during the course of history have not been Islamic wars. Only those wars were Islamic in which the Prophet and his immediate followers engaged for the sake of making Islam secure and extirpating religious persecution. Respect for human life is one of the fundamentals of Islam and war is permitted only for the rightful protection of human life and its intrinsic values. The Qur'an is full of injunctions to respect and protect human life. In preaching respect for human life, the social solidarity of humanity is also brought in view. `And therefore We enjoined it on the Israelites that whoever slays a person unless it be for manslaughter or mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all mankind, and whoever keeps him alive, it is as though he kept alive all mankind' (v. 32). Again, unlawful taking of human life is

coupled with adultery as the most heinous of sins. The good people `kill not a person unjustly and do not fornicate; whoever does it will meet with punishment' (xxv. 68). The pre-Islamic Arabs used to kill their new-born girls, considering them to be economic and social burdens. Islam condemned this practice vehemently and extirpated it from the entire Muslim world. This shameful crime never raised its head again in the civilised world. Where two persons fight each other, as in a duel, on account of some irrational passion, the Prophet said that the murderer and the murdered shall both go to hell. When the Prophet enumerated great sins, murder was always there in the list. `The greatest of sins is associating another god with Allah, murder, disobedience of parents and telling of lies' (Anas ibn Malik); `A believer continues to be within the pale of his religion so long as he does not shed unlawful blood' (Ibn `Umar).

It will be noted that wherever Islam prohibits killing, it always qualifies it as killing without justice. `Thou shall not kill' is not an absolute injunction. There are situations in life when killing becomes a paramount duty. The word *fitna* is often used in the Qur'an wherever the permission to kill an evildoer is given, and it is said *fitna* is worse than killing. The word *fitna* is difficult to translate with a single English word. It means trial, temptation, putting a man in difficulties. It also means persecution, social tyranny, or social disorder and compelling a man to unlawful submission, or forcibly keeping away a man from pursuing the right path, or misleading a man into false pursuits, or into deviation from truth. The word is often used in the Qur'an in conjunction with the word *fasad* which means corruption and disruption and signifies social disorder and tyranny. Killing is sanctioned by Islam only to prevent *fitna* and *fasad,* to re-establish social order, to prevent persecution and to create conditions for the reign of law

instead of a reign of terror. The people against whom the Prophet waged war denied all liberty of conscience to human beings. Whoever did not agree with them in their worship and customs was persecuted, exiled or killed. The Muslims were not allowed to fight to enrich themselves at the cost of the vanquished. All Muslim jurists are agreed that it is unlawful to fight only for the extension of territory or any economic gains. It is also not lawful to fight in order to convert others forcibly to Islam. The great Caliph 'Umar had a Christian slave. Off and on he would place before him the beauty and truth of Islam and persuade him to become a Muslim. The slave woud always say, 'No, I don't accept'. On his refusal 'Umar would reply, 'Please yourself, there is no compulsion in Islam'. Would a man like 'Umar wage war on peoples and nations, right and left, in order to convert them to Islam at the point of the bayonet, when he felt helpless against his own slave? Let the unbiased reflect.

The example of Buddha and Christ as great spiritual guides of humanity has led some of their followers and certain others to identify spirituality with prohibition of all war. Some Christian writers have held the opinion that Muhammad was a good prophet so long as he preached and suffered in Mecca but, when he waged war and founded a state, he became a politician and legislator; and hence ceased to be a prophet. It is a very narrow view of prophethood to say that a prophet is a prophet only so long as he merely talks of love and justice and goodwill, but the moment he comes to grip with realities and begins to recast the sorry scheme of things according to the ideals that he preaches, he descends to a lower level of existence. Everyone knows how easy it is to preach high ideals and how difficult it is to practise them in great personal, social and political conflicts. Unless and until ideals are put to the test of the stress and strain of social and political life, they remain suspended in mid-air and are considered to be only

counsels of perfection and unrealisable pious dreams. Muhammad, whom a writer in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* calls the most successful prophet in history, had the distinction of putting before humanity realisable ideals. He realised them during his lifetime to the extent that he could say with satisfaction, 'I have fulfilled my mission'. He sheathed his sword when he had extirpated religious intolerance and made religion free for all. The Qur'an repeats so often: 'And fight with them until there is no persecution and religion should be only for Allah, but if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors' (ii. 193). Whoever accepts the peace of the Lord, whatever may be his religion, is under your protection. Protect his life, honour and property as you would protect your own.

If we glance through history we can see that no religion and no culture was ever able to banish war from human society. Religions like Christianity, Buddhism and the Vedantic religion of the Hindus had to interpret their doctrines in a way that would make them consonant with reality. Perhaps more wars have been waged by Christian nations among themselves and against non-Christians than by any other group of humanity, and as to religious persecution and intolerance no religion can ever beat the Christian record. And it is the height of prejudice and perversity that it is the Christian writers who have persistently spread the calumny against Islam that it is a religion of the sword and that the Muslim fanatical hordes threw themselves against the rest of the world with the sword in one hand and the Qur'an in the other. Such a charge could either be the result of ignorance of history or a product of malice. The history of the rise of Islam and its struggle for self-preservation and the preservation of common human liberties and decencies has been misinterpreted as the use of force for the spread of a

particular doctrine. In the beginning, Islam offered treaties of peace to those Arabian tribes and Jews who did not choose freely to accept Islam, and the Qur'an lays great stress on the observance of contracts and treaties. But when the Arabian tribes repeatedly violated the treaties and tried to form alliances with one another for the destruction of nascent Islam, only two alternatives were left: to crush them or be crushed. Those who willingly entered Islam entered a brotherhood which offered complete liberty, fraternity and equality to every citizen irrespective of race or class. The lowest of the low had the same rights as the highest of the high, the president of the republic. Isam is considered by some not as a religion but as a socio-political movement. Even considered as such, one may ask a student of history to search the annals of mankind to find any movement before Islam which abolished social and class distinctions altogether and offered other nations not slavery but complete equality. Bilal, the negro, was esteemed higher than many aristocrats of the Quraysh because of his character and sacrifices. One might object and say, 'Yes, it was a brotherhood of the faithful, but what about those who stood outside the pale of Islam?' The answer is that to them Islam offered complete protection of their religion and their mode of life. The same reign of law covered them. In a way they had even a more advantageous position than the Muslims themselves. They received all the protection from the state without the duties enjoined on the Muslims. In lieu of a light tax it was enjoined on the state to protect their lives, their property and their honour. The Muslims had to pay a heavy tax on their surplus capital but the non-Muslims were exempted from it. The poor, the old unearning people, the disabled, the women and the children and priests of other religions were all exempted from it, and whenever a non-Muslim proved his inability to pay even this light tax, he was exempted. Islam has been calumnised as religious

imperialism. But has there been at any time of history any type of imperialism which compelled the rulers to bear greater burdens than the ruled? There were cases in early Islamic history when the money paid by non-Muslim tribes for protection was returned to them when the Muslims found themselves unable to protect them against their foes. This tax, called *Jizia*, has been misunderstood as a discriminatory tax, making an invidious distinction among the citizens of a state. This charge is again based on ignorance of Islamic polity. If it discriminated at all, it discriminated against Muslim protectors themselves who were compelled to pay higher taxes and also had the duty to fight for the state; there was no compulsory military service for the non-Muslims. Those non-Muslims who did military service were exempted from the tax.

When the Qur'an inculcates the necessity for a righteous war, it mentions the protection of other religions even before the protection of Islam itself. The establishment of peace on earth and not the protection of the Muslim community only is given as a justifiable reason for war. `And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder but Allah is gracious to His creatures' (ii. 251). The order in which the protection of places of worship is mentioned is worth noticing and is very significant to appreciate the spirit of Islam and its philosophy of war. `Had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered' (xxii. 40). The mosque is mentioned last and not first. Whenever barbaric hordes or religious fanatics invade other peoples, all lovers of religious liberty must stand up and fight so that the right of freedom of worship and freedom of conscience, from which so many other civil liberties follow, is secured. It is explicitly forbidden in Islam either to

demolish or desecrate the place of worship of any people, and the priests of any religion are not to be killed or harassed in any way. If any Muslim invader ever acted contrary to this injunction, the fault cannot be ascribed to Islam. The failings of a people, only superficially professing a religion, cannot be laid at the door of religion itself. Their failings are the fruit of their disbelief and not a direct product of their faith. In many places, the Qur'an enjoins the necessity or war to establish peace for mankind. This means that if at any time forces of tyranny and oppression raise their head anywhere and threaten the peace of the world, it is a duty to fight against such aggression. Wars that have been waged throughout the course of human history originated from diverse motives. There were wars of tribe against tribe either for economic gains or because of incitements of passions of anger and revenge or for the expenditure of surplus energy which had no outlet for constructive, social purposes or on account of the pressure of growing populations, the means of subsistence lagging behind the mouths to be fed. But even from the very beginning, economic gains or, what communistic economics calls, the means of production and distribution were never the sole motives of human conflicts. Insult to a member of the tribe or his murder or insult to the god of the tribe was enough to start a war or a feud which may last for a whole century. We have ample examples of it in the history of the Arabian tribes before Islam. Then we have invasions of barbaric hordes tempted by the spoils of civilised life that had become soft by the amenities of urban existence or by moral degeneracy and social tyranny. Terrible wars of devastation have also been waged by religious intolerance and fanaticism. of which Crusades are the most shameful example. They convulsed the whole of Europe and caused more disorder and confusion in the lands from where the crusaders came and through which they passed than in the

Muslim countries they attempted to crush and subdue. Then we have endless dynastic wars waged for the aggrandizement or protection of dynasties and entire nations were used as pawns in the game of power politics. Millions of human beings were murdered and countless homes destroyed because of the ambitions of a few power-intoxicated rulers.

Ever since the rise of industrial capitalism new motives for wars entered history. Weaker nations who had not organised themselves industrially and had lagged behind in the inventions of more powerful instruments of production and destruction were subdued for the supply of cheap raw materials and for the sale of manufactured goods. The industrial West proposed to enslave the whole world for its benefit. Side by side with this, the West had developed racial, linguistic and territorial nationalism and patriotic fervour was exploited in the interests of capitalism. Industrial capitalism and nationalism nursed seeds of their own destruction within their own organism, and we now have humanity divided on the basis of economic ideologies which are enlisting moral and religious fervour for the purpose of defence and offence, and the world is on the brink of another Armageddon.

If religion must be related to life and has to nurture and preserve human values, we have to find out what guidance Islam can offer in such a situation. We have already outlined the Islamic philosophy of war. Islam allows war and enjoins it as a duty to establish social order or to crush the sources of injustice. Islam does not believe in tribes and races dividing humanity into hostile groups; nor does it sanction nationalism as developed in the West. Tribes and nations do exist and will continue to exist. The Qur'an considers the variety of languages and colours as one of the blessings of God; but it stresses that humanity is

essentially one: 'Mankind were one community, and Allah sent unto them Prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and revealed to them the Book with truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differ' (ii. 213). Islam, therefore, would stand against recialism and nationalism; no war based on national aggrandizement would be permitted.

Some people think that Islam has sanctioned only defensive wars. If it means that you must wait till you are actually attacked, it is a misinterpretation of the essential principles of Islam. War must be waged for the defence of essential human liberties, as the Qur'an says, `Fight with them until there is no persecution and religion should be only for Allah' (ii. 193). If you see an enemy preparing to destroy your liberties, you must crush him before he becomes too strong for you. Islam enjoins on its followers to keep ready for a trial of strength against the enemies of humanity, but all attempts must be made to keep the peace between different peoples. War is inevitable so long as humanity is divided into warring groups ready to pounce upon one another, and there is always a possibility of aggression.

The principle of a league of nations is also enunciated in the Qur'an. All nations must live peacefully as organs of the body of humanity; everyone must be allowed to follow his own way of life. Even a nation morally or intellectually superior to another has no mission to impose its own way of life on another nation by force. In the ancient world, religion comprised the whole of life and when the Qur'an enunciates the principle that there must not be any compulsion about religion it is tantamount to saying that individuals and nations must be left free to follow their own ways so long as they do not engender social confusion and persecution. This is a charter of liberty for all human

groups, which is more comprehensive than the Magna Charta of King John or the Atlantic Charter signed even by the imperialists. According to Islam, every civilised nation should accept it as a principle of war and peace that whenever the helpless and the weak are persecuted, an honest and righteous people should rise to crush the tyrant. In Islam, fighting in the way of the Lord means fighting for social justice; it does not mean fighting to spread a certain dogma. In countless places the Book says that you have to fight against tyranny and suppression of liberties and the fight must go on till persecution stops and people are free to believe as they like and act in a free manner. 'And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men and the women, and the children (of) those who say: Our Lord! cause us to go forth form this town whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a helper? (iv. 75). This clearly explains what is meant by fighting in the way of the Lord. It is not a fight for a theological mystery or a metaphysical doctrine; God is the ideal of human conduct; He stands for social justice. The fight for social justice only is enjoined by Islam; a war for any other purpose would be un-Islamic.

Chapter 12

BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Many idealists, both philosophical and religious, have discussed the constitution of an ideal state and some practical dreamers have even attempted to materialise them, here and there, with varying degrees of success. Planning of utopias has been a pleasant intellectual exercise. From Plato to H.G. Wells we could traverse through a series of ideal plans which would secure justice for the individual and for society, securing the maximum amount of leisure and opportunities for an all-round cultural development. The most classical of these attempts is the perfect Greek city-state planned with thoroughness by Socrates and Plato. They themselves doubted whether it was practicable, as Socrates confessed in the end that its pattern was laid in the heavens, and, like all ideas and ideals, actual reality could copy it only imperfectly, although Plato also talked of it as a possibility and not as a mere dream. He says in the *Republic*, 'We do not speak of things that are impossible though we admit that they are difficult. It is no mere dream; if kings were philosophers or philosopher-kings, it might be realised.' But the idea of its practicability varies with the moods of Plato because elsewhere he says, 'Our city is founded on words; for it exists nowhere, I think, on the earth'. 'It is no matter,' he says again, 'whether it exists or ever will exist'.

When Plato desires to see king-philosophers or philosopher-kings, one is apt to misunderstand him if one does not grasp fully the significance of these two words as brought out by him in his *Dialogues*. Different cultures have used different words for their ideal men. Hindus called them *avatars* or *rishis*, Stoics called them sages, the Israelites called them prophets and the Greeks, particularly Socrates and Plato, called them philosophers. In the ideal philosopher of Plato all the cultural values are completely embodied. He is no mere dialectician, speculator or dreamer; he is a realiser of ideals which he clearly visualises and he actualises them in personal life and social reconstruction. So, when Plato talks of kings, he does not mean absolute rulers who wield power to realise their personal ambitions but rational rulers with absolute authority to realise their ideals of justice. They are men of supreme wisdom, masters of action and unsullied character.

Now, it is a historical fact that of all the great guides of mankind none succeeded in the realisation of an ideal state except the Prophet of Islam. He was the philosopher-king of whom Plato had dreamed; he was the man with high ideals of justice, possessing at the same time the character and the power to put them into practice and see their realisation before his own eyes during his lifetime, so far as the limitations of times and circumstances could permit, and leaving, it to his successors and to the epochs to come to actualise them further progressively as the circumstances demand and allow. Plato dreamed only of a Greek city-state, three-fourths of whose population consisted of slaves with practically no civil rights. He visualised some sort of alliance with other Greek city-state, but, for him, the rest of the world was a barbarian world, which might well be left out to its own barbaric devices and was not worth bothering

about; the non-Greek world was not included in his idealism.

Between Plato's ideal state and the Prophet's ideal state there is a world of difference. The Prophet was a practical idealist. He did not believe in unrealisable ideals so far as the practical life of humanity was concerned. For him the ideal and the practicable converged, for he thought it of no use placing ideals before humanity which its nature, with all its limitations, was incapable of embodying in actual life. He said, `God imposes no duties on men which are beyond their capacities and He knows what are the inescapable demands of human nature.' The second great difference between him and Plato was that the Prophet visualised the whole of humanity as one organism in which a single soul was multiplied. The Qur'an addresses humanity in general and not the citizens of one city only. The Prophet was not satisfied with the successful foundation of a city-state in Mecca or Medina, nor was he satisfied when practically the whole of the Arabian peninsula came under his domination. The moment he felt secure in his homeland, he issued invitations to the rulers of the surrounding kingdoms, not to submit to him, or accept Arab domination, but to submit to the ideal which could unite diverse races and creeds. The ideal was the unity of all reality called God, Who embodied the best ideals of common humanity and justice; the call was to worship the one ideal for all, and to practise social justice, disregarding the differences of creeds and races. It was similar to the invitation issued to the Jews and Christians to come together on that which should be a common basis between them, which was nothing more than the worship of one ideal which had to be actualised, and from which all social justice followed as a corollary. Islam visualises virtue as the common heritage of all civilised humanity, and the Qur'an uses the word *ma'ruf* for virtue,

which means the `qualities well known'. It teaches that all humanity craves for the good, but has vague and sometimes distorted ideas about it.

For Islam spirituality has a twofold aspect; it is a persoanl relation of man to God, but towards humanity and society it signifies social rights and responsibilities. No man is fully spiritual who seeks only his own personal salvation in isolation from society; social threads form the warp and woof of his personality. Religion is not incessant prayers and meditations in a convent or a cave; it is actual social life lived in accordance with the ideal. Islam, therefore, has discredited asceticism and mystical quietism; its prescribed prayers are all primarily congregational prayers, though a devotee is also urged to be alone with God sometimes, particularly during the silence and solitude of the night; but even this strengthening and deepening of the soul must eventuate in good deeds in the practical affairs of life.

Islam, therefore, seldom deals with the individual as individual; he is always visualised as a member of a family and a community, who earns his livelihood by honest labour. The Prophet said, `The wage-earner is a friend of God.' Recent Socialism and Communism have begun to shout from housetops of the dignity of labour and of the doctrine that he who does not work shall not eat. But more than thirteen hundred years ago, the Prophet established the dignity of labour by working as a labourer himself. It was he who said, `Pay the labourer before his sweat dries up,' and the man who tills the soil has a better right to the land. He founded a state of workers and peasants and shepherds but he included the honest merchant and the seeker of knowledge too among the workers. What he wanted to discourage was parasitism and living on unearned income. He was the first socialist-economist in the world to levy a

tax on capital and abolish the law of primogeniture according to which the eldest born would inherit the entire estate to the complete exclusion of his younger brothers and sisters and other heirs.

Islam is accused of founding a theocratic state, dabbling in politics, legislation and economics. As Christ had made no reference to the cultural side of man and was unwilling to meddle with the affairs of the state, it is thought that a man of God has no business to bother with politics or economics. It is considered enough that he should be morally immaculate and preach only love and goodwill towards mankind. In a great world religion like Buddhism, we find its founder concerned more with metaphysics than with the actual life of man. Buddha tried to prove the unreality of all manifested and created existence, identifying all life with evil produced by the desire to live; hence the chief aim of man was deliverance from all personal and social existence by the complete annihilation of desire. It is evident that such a teacher could have nothing to do with the economic remoulding of society or with the politics of an actual or an ideal state. Before Islam came on the secne, religion everywhere meant otherworldliness. The early Christians were convinced that the end of the world was very near and, therefore, nothing was worth while except penitence and prayer. As to the evils in the actual state, they thought it was not their duty to resist them; they believed that the Sermon on the Mount had taught them passive submission even to tyranny: to turn the other cheek when slapped on the face and to give away the coat also to the man who had robbed you of your shirt. As to submitting to the laws of the state in which they lived, they were reminded of the commandment of Jesus, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' The doctrine of love and mercy preached by Jesus was pushed to the extreme of passive

tolerance of evil. They forgot the fundamental fact of human nature that it is as much evil to suffer evil unprotestingly as it is to commit evil, and it is the slavish sufferers who create tyrants. The Prophet said, 'It is the duty of every man to remove evil actively when he sees it and, if he cannot do so, to protest against it in words, and if he cannot do even that, to detest it in his heart, which is the least manifestation of faith.' He agreed with Plato and Aristotle that a just man can live justly only in a just state; therefore the founding of a just state is the *sine qua non* of social justice and the life of well-being for an individual. There was great truth in what Christ said, that the kingdom of heaven is within you, because no just kingdom can be founded by unjust men who have not first created a kingdom of heaven within their own souls, by realising the ideal in their own personal lives. But Islam said that is not enough; the kingdom of heaven within must be externalised into a kingdom of heaven without, so that the organised life of man may be based on love, fraternity and justice. If God's good men leave the social and political life of man alone, to go its own way, then by the perversion of the economic and social structure even the goodness of the good individuals will be jeopardised. The Prophet said that 'if in a society some people do evil and others do nothing to prevent it, then all of them will be engulfed in ruin, the good as well as the bad, because the good have been only passively good and done nothing actively to prevent evil.'

Islam, therefore, is not a mere belief in the unity of God and saving an individual's soul by praying to Him and by avoiding all contamination with the world. Its primary aim is the betterment of life here and now by dealing practically and comprehensively with it in all its essential aspects. But no great religion can be purely secular, considering this present life to be the *alpha* and *omega* of all

existence. Religion, for which the unseen and unrealised is always much greater than our limited experience here, must be otherworldly in one sense of the word or the other. But Islam created a synthesis of the two worlds: the life hereafter is determined by the life lived here and now. `He who is blind here shall be blind there.' In the life hereafter, when the virtuous shall taste the fruits of paradise they shall say that `they have tasted something like this even in the life before.' Life lived here must be organised on the basis of universal love and justice as the Qur'an says, `My mercy encompasses everything' (vii. 156). The believer is asked to pray 'Our Lord! grant us good in this world and good in the life hereafter, and save us from the chastisement of the fire' (ii. 201). We must note in this prayer that this world has a chronological, though not a value, priority and preference; it consists of causes, of which the life hereafter too shall witness the effects, although all effects are not postponed.

Man, therefore, for Islam, is a social and a political being; his welfare is in every respect bound up with the welfare of society. The highest organisation of society is the state. Islam had to found a state and give to the world in practical form the ideals of statehood. Human destiny had at last thrown up a philosopher-king, and it is a matter of paramount importance for the remoulding of human society to examine closely what his ideals were and in what manner he realised them in his lifetime, in the creation of a polity.

The question how religion should inspire, inform and discipline life naturally gets related to the questions as to how it should be related to that highest organisation of society called the state. When we come to brass-tacks and grapple with realities, the concept of an invisible state whose locus is the divinity or the ideal city-state pattern of Plato or the kingdom of heaven within us, would not

suffice. Every visible state embodies an ideal which it considers to be practicable, and its entire political and cultural structure and the nature of its institutions depends on it. It is a matter of paramount importance for the life of the citizens of a state, as well as for the rest of humanity, to define and determine the ideal which inspires it and gives a practical shape to the idea of well-being which it is meant to realise. Islamic state is often called a theocracy. It will help us considerably in the clarification of issues if we define clearly the meaning of theocracy as distinguished from a purely secular state. A theocratic state is one which derives authority for its sanctions from many gods or one God or from some religious principles which act as regulative forces. All primitive communities contain visible as well as invisible elements; a tribe has `seen' as well as `unseen' rulers. The traditions and customs of the tribe are sanctioned and sanctified by unseen forces; it is through them that the tribe coheres together. Customs have a tendency to gather a force of their own and continue with the force of inertia even after the religious beliefs, which originally sanctioned them, become weak and shaken. Tribal solidarity then rests more on its modes of life and customs and traditions than on any firmly believed invisible basis. Such communities, when they develop to a certain stage of organisation, almost invariably engender a priestly class. The priest is a mediator between the tribe and its unseen rulers. Although every developed tribe has its priests, in the primitive cultures, there is as yet no division between church and state or between secular and religious law. In the primitive tribe, the individual has not yet emerged; self as an independent centre of judgement and action does not exist as yet; there is no self except the tribal self. Benefit as well as injury to the tribe is collective. One might say that, at the primitive stage, the tribal organisation is theocratically collective. It might be termed Theocratic Communism. This

is a primitive communism with which human society starts. Gods or the unseen powers are the guardians and custodians of tribal customs; the head of the tribe does not rule in his own name but in the name of the tribal self which has been in a way deified into a supra-personal entity.

In more developed civilisations the relation of religion to the state has assumed various forms. Ancient Hindu civilisation and the Hindu state were theocratic. As ritualistic religion became more and more complicated by abstruse theologies, cosmologies and eschatologies, a priestly class developed presuming to have a hold on the powers of the unseen. Every act of life was a religious act and had to be sanctioned by the Brahmanic priesthood. The Brahmans were the custodians of law and custom, and they were the legislators. The rulers received their authority from them and had to prostrate themselves before them before they ascended their thrones. On every important occasion the Brahman had to be worshipped by the secular rulers, and in all political decisions his voice was the most potent. The codes which regulate all morality and all custom are the Shastras in which theology, morality and law are not yet differentiated. Manu's `Dharma Shastra' is still the stronghold of all Hindu orthodoxy. Marriage, inheritance, trade, caste regulations, dietetics, in short every aspect of life is covered by this religious code, and Hindu society, untill it is completely metamorphosed beyond recognition, is theocratic through and through. Brahmanism has had longer life than any other great religion, and hitherto it has withstood all onslaughts on its power and privilege. When Kipling said about the East that it bows low before every blast of upheaval or conquest in patient deep disdain and with the passing away of the blast plunges in thought again, it was not so much the tenacity of any fixed system of beliefs but the force of religiously sanctioned tradition and

custom which stands like a rock among the tempests that might rise and spend their rage in foam at its base. It would be impossible to define Hinduism as a particular faith or a system of beliefs held by a majority of its followers. From philosophical monism or monotheism to the crudest polytheism, nature worship, totemism or fetishism, all are included in its fold. To search for a common belief among the Hindus is like searching for a needle in haystack, and the search would be as futile as a cynic has said about philosophers that they are like blind men loooking in the dark for a black cat which does not exist. Among the Hindus, one could discover the finest specimens of refined spirituality, but at the other end you would find sects living on totemism and believing even in human sacrifice. Hinduism, as a refined spiritual and moral doctrine developed by its great saints and philosophers, has never successfully repudiated the low and crude forms, partly because the Brahmans had developed a theory of Karma and caste which shirked all cultural responsibility for the outcasts. Lower humanity lived and suffered because it had deserved it, and any attempt to elevate them spiritually would be the greatest of sins as interfering with the divine plan of the segregation of castes. Hindu priesthood has another distinctive trait for which it is difficult to find a parallel in other civilisations. So far as beliefs about the unseen are concerned it is the most tolerant and most catholic of priesthoods. Not only the priests but the Hindu society in general is indifferent about beliefs. You may believe in anything you like or you may believe in nothing: an atheist is as good a Hindu as a Vedantic mystic or a theist like Tagore or Gandhi. Customs and traditions and an undefined belief in Hindu solidarity, recently strengthened by the feeling of nationalism, which was a product of impact with the West, hold Hindu society together; but there is no inner or organic unity.

Gandhian leadership generated forces in the Hindu group of communities, which are not yet quite harmonised. Gandhi was a theist and a religious man. From a conglomeration of Hindu beliefs, he, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, picked up theism as representing the highest development of Hinduism. He attempted to mitigate the inhumanity of the caste system, although more radical reformers would have liked him to be more uncompromising to eradicate this evil root and branch by a more frontal attack. But, religiously as well as socially, he was a reformist and not a revolutionary. He firmly believed that a state should not be secular in the sense that it leaves out God and the spiritual tradition and experience handed down through the centuries by the great saints and prophets, not of Hinduism only but of all great religions. He held no superstitious belief and his firm conviction was that humanity could be saved only by the creed of non-violence. India achieved independence through his vision and action. He wanted a secular state in the sense that no particular religion should impose its ideology and its way of life on the followers of other religions. But the state he visualised he called *Ram Raj,* the government of God, which is, in a way, a theocratic basis. But his *Ram Raj* could not have any religious code to go by and no church to dominate the state.

He has left numerous groups with divergent ideologies who all claim him as their *Guru*. Factions are fighting bitterly against one another in his name; it has happened to him what has always happened to all great leaders of thought and action who dealt with life comprehensively and whose actions and utterances could, by isolation and exaggeration, be interpreted into divergent and even hostile sects. Nehru, on whose shoulders his political mantle has fallen, is not a religious man. He is never tired of reiterating that the state should be completely secular and should leave religion alone. But Sri

Rajagopalacharia, one of the most intellectual and devout disciples of Gandhi, says that the state must have a religious basis and background, because without religion the society and the state get disharmonised. This corresponds with the Islamic view that where vision fails nations perish, and 'the truest of visions is the vision of God.' India claims to be a secular state and accuses Pakistan of adopting a theocratic basis. But in actual practice Hindu India is far more theocratic than Pakistan. Could a state be genuinely called secular if the life of its citizens is still governed mainly by religious traditions, customs, and prejudices? Ritual enters into the social life of the Hindus more than it ever did even with the Jews. Religious tradition takes charge of him even before he is born. He is born religiously, his social status being determined by the laws of *karma* and caste. He eats religiously, drinks religiously, shaves religiously, bathes religiously, marries and dies religiously and, as someone has said, he even sins religiously. Nehru says that the predominant complexion and character of Indian culture will be Hindu, but Hindu culture is through and through religious. All states are built upon the psychology of their peoples; constitutions, divorced from the psychology of the peoples for whom they are meant, have a spurious or short existence. Reverence for the cow, which unites most of the Hindus, has resulted in penal enactments about the slaughter of even those cows whose upkeep is extremely uneconomical and is an unbearable burden on the poor farmer, for whom it is a dire struggle to keep himself and his family on this side of starvation. How could one expect a society so rigidly bound by religiously sanctioned traditions, customs and prejudices to fraternise on terms of equality with another group which repudiates their sanctity? The constitution of a state, if it is not to be only a set of counsels of perfection, borrowed from the writings of intellectually free reformers, has to conform to the

psychology of its citizens. Workable constitutions must grow out of the life of the people and their deep-rooted habits of thought, feeling and action.

After this diversion we must revert to our attempt to define theocracy and a secular state more clearly, in order to turn to our original subject of Islam and its distinctive type of theocracy. Theocracy is a state which has either an overt or a covert religious basis. It may be government by priests or by religiously sanctioned customs; in all theocracy, somehow, the invisible must be the basis of the visible. Theocracies are defenders of particular metphysical beliefs; these beliefs may be codified or embodied in time-honoured customs, rituals and traditions. A secular state would be one in which either the welfare of all subjects, or particularly the well-being of special classes, is the primary aim. They do not derive their laws or sanctions from any suprarationally revealed source; they are free to legislate as times and circumstances require. If they are highly developed states, they may define certain fundamental rights and duties of the citizens without any reference to God or gods or any revealed source. Such states would make no distinciton betwen their citizens on the basis of their race or religious convictions.. As a secular state would be indifferent to religion there would be wide religious liberty. For the service of the state or for any rights or privileges the religion of a citizen would neither benefit nor injure him. These are, broadly, the claims of secular states.

But as a theocratic state may assume various forms, so can a secular state; mere secularity is no guarantee of any particular ideology. Most of the modern states are, for all practical purposes, secular states but they differ widely in their ideals of well-being and their *modus operandi*. It has become a sign of high ideality and respectability to call one's state secular and democratic. Religion has ceased to be

explicitly stated as the basis of any state that hopes to win the good-will of mankind, although great statesmen of England and the United States, off and on, try to impress on their citizens and announce it to the rest of the world that theirs is a Christian civilisation and their aim is to realise Christian ideals in all aspects of life. They do not try to define Christian ideology more closely because it would lead to bitter controversies; like many other slogans, its value lies in its indefiniteness. It is so easy to agree on idealistic and vague generalities. The difficulties arise when you want to draw out, with logic and sincerity, the concrete implications of a general truth, which has become a platitude and a truism. How many mutually hostile systems use the same terminology! Almost all of them now call themselves secular and democratic. Democracy has become the vaguest of concepts. Hitler's Nazism claimed to be a democracy and great Nazis tried to convince or deceive the world that Hitler had been elected as leader of the nation by a free democratic vote and that he represented the voice and will of the people. The persecution of the Jews was a demonstration of democracy, because it was the will of an exasperated majority giving its verdict against an alleged anti-national minority. The Fascists also claimed that they had invented a special brand of democracy, superior to the Anglo-American type, which, according to Mussolini, was the luxury of secure and prosperous nations. But insecure *have-not* nations could ill-afford to imitate it. Russian Communism claims to be the most democratic of all the existing systems; they call Anglo-American democracy as plutocracy, where directly or indirectly capital governs and labour is exploited. The British and the Americans call Russian Communism as totalitarianism where the colossus of state capitalism and the domination of one party has deprived the individual of his fundamental liberties. So we see both secularism and democracy are capable of assuming

many forms. German philosophers, like Hegel and Fichte, promulgated the doctrine of the worship of the state and the world mission of the German nation. This was secularism presented in the form of idealism. Thinkers like Nietzsche and after him Treitske preached power as the ultimate political value. Hitler tried to abolish the domination of all churches and religious ideologies to establish racialism, still retaining God as the cosmic supporter of the Aryan race which becomes for him the chosen people; it was a different version of that very Jewish ideology which he strove to extirpate. So we may conclude that secularism is a very Protean concept; it is capable of assuming many shapes. It may be capitalism, racialism, proletarianism, socialism, or it may become a broad humanitarian doctrine which genuinely secures all human liberties and considers rational nationalism as an essential part of humanitarian internationalism. Mere slogans can give us no light until we know all their implications and practical applications.

Now we come to our chief question of the relation of Islam to statehood. As we have already stated, Islam does not confine itself to morality or spirituality or salvation of the individual as an isolated entity. The individual ego is, no doubt, of paramount value, but it lives and moves and has its being in society; it is society that generates self-consciousness and develops it. All morality has a social reference. Islam always deals with man in society, and for him only social justice is the stepping-stone to higher things. Islam has not left the individual with only preachings of love for his neighbour. High morality had been preached by all great religions but no religion before Islam had made the attempt, at its very inception, to organise a society into a welfare state. Islam actually founded a state on its ideology and made it a model welfare state. As we have already remarked, Plato's philosopher had become a king. It offered an example of how and why a state should be founded. If

people, inspired with the ideals of social justice, have to achieve any concrete results, they must organise themselves to achieve their ends. In a world dominated by irrational prejudices and wild urges and surrounded by individuals and classes with vested interests, such an idealistic group shall have to fight for its very existence. Islam means peace; and war is the antithesis of peace. Islam gave the world a rational view of war. War is a thing to be avoided, but if war only could ward off a greater evil, then it becomes a paramount duty. When peace is established and human liberties are secured, then the sword must be sheathed immediately. Islam suffered for more than a decade at the hands of savage persecutors who had no respect for human life and its values. When it gathered enough strength to protect the weak and the helpless, to compel its pesecutors to cease from persecution, it ordered its followers to fight only till peace is restored and human liberty becomes secure. Although it was a religious movement, war for the propagation of the creed was not sanctioned. The Qur'an announced the principle that `there is no compulsion in religion' (ii. 256). During the time of the Prophet and the Great Khalifas there were sometimes non-Muslims serving in their households but they were not compelled to accept Islam.

The Muslim state was founded on certain definite principles. As the Islamic state was founded on the basis of religion, it may rightly be termed theocracy, but the mere term would be of no use unless we define it more closely. The Muslim state, as founded by the Prophet and developed further by his immediate susccessors, gives us certain basic concepts.

(1) Muslisms, like the followers of every other religion, have a right to enjoy religious freedom. If they are persecuted and have not strength enough to defend their life

and honour, they should stick to their faith and suffer patiently.

(2) If they reach the limit of patience and endurance and are still unable to defend themselves, they should migrate from the abode of tyranny. God's earth is wide enough to offer them shelter somewhere. According to this injunction, the early Muslims were asked to migrate to Abyssinia and later on to Medina and other places.

(3) They should try to enter into treaties with non-Muslims for creating conditions of peace for themselves and for others.

(4) They should abide by those treaties even if they are not satisfactory to them on all counts. One-sided violation of a treaty is sinful. If they are convinced of perfidy on the part of the other contracting party, they should give a notice and fix a term for the termination of the treaty.

(5) When they have gained enough power to protect themselves by force, they are allowed to use force against the aggressors without transgressing proper limits. They are allowed to fight only till essential liberties are secured or their opponents are completely subdued.

(6) The non-Muslims, if they become peaceful and loyal subjects of the state, are to be granted complete liberty of religious belief and practice. In lieu of a small and reasonable tax for protection, which they shall pay to the state, their equality before the law is to be guaranteed. A non-Muslim can sue even the president of the republic in the court, as it actually happened during the reign of the early Khalifas. The life, honour and property of the non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state shall receive full protection and no Muslim shall be allowed to plead a privilege against him.

(7) The Muslim state shall be a socialist republic. Monarchy has no place in Islam, nor does hereditary succession receive any sanction. It shall be a theocractic democracy with no priesthood and no church. It shall be a theocracy only in the sense that it derives its authority from God. God shall be a symbol for universal social justice.

(8) The fundamentals of the constitution shall guarantee equal civil liberties to all subjects. All non-Muslim religious communities shall have the right to get their cases decided according to their own personal laws, if they do not violate elementary human rights.

(9) Under the law, men and women shall enjoy the same fundamental rights. Women will be allowed to hold property in their own names. Marriage will be a contract in which any conditions could be inserted provided they are not immoral or illegal.

(10) The economics of society shall be so regulated that capitalism and living on unearned income is discouraged.

(11) The law of primogeniture, according to which only the eledest son inherits the entire estate, shall be abolished.

(12) It shall be compulsory to levy a tax on capital so that it may not cease to circulate or may not go on accumulating. The main purpose of this tax shall be the relief of suffering and gradual economic levelling of society; it shall be taken from those who have and shall be spent on those who have not.

(13) The well-being of all citizens is the chief purpose of the state; it shall not be merely a police state whose functions end with the securing of law and order. An Islamic state is a welfare state.

(14) No citizen, Muslim or non-Muslim, shall be taxed beyond his capacity; those who are incapable of earning shall pay no taxes; on the other hand, they shall be helped by the state exchequer.

(15) There shall be freedom of trade but speculation in trade shall be prohibited and cornering of commodities for profiteering shall be considered unlawful.

(16) There shall be a circulation of economic goods in society. Keeping property undivided in a joint family system shall be unlawful. At the death of a property-holder, his near relatives shall inherit according to an equitable system so that capital may be dispersed in society, in order to make its benefits widespread.

(17) No system of the election of a president of the republic is prescribed. Recommendation to elect a president may be made from among a panel of names but no nomination of a successor not ratified by the people is allowed. the principle is elicited from the practice of the Prophet and his immediate successors. Everyone has a right to be elected and everyone has a right to vote if he satisfies certain elementary conditions of mental and moral fitness. The president may be called to account for any of his actions by any citizen, and it will be his duty to justify his conduct.

(18) According to Islam, sovereignty does not belong to any monarch or a class nor does it rest with the people in general. Sovereignty belongs to God and the principles of social justice are derived from His attributes. That sovereignty is delegated to men of character and integrity. The fundamentals of the constitution of the state are ordained by God; the fundamental principles of legislation are also sanctioned by Him. With the alteration of

circumstances, new legislative adaptations are allowed by consensus of the learned.

(19) The Islamic state shall follow a prescribed model in its broad outlines; it is a system, but it is an open and not a closed system. Muslims are free to legislate as the circumstances demand; but no legislation shall violate the basic constitution. Only those people should be chosen to frame laws and regulations who have fully grasped the spirit of Islam and the fundamentals of social justice. The learned men in the state should continue to reinterpret and revise the laws; they shall not be changed merely by the vote of the ignorant masses creating brute majorities.

(20) All attempts are to be made to secure international peace. The Qur'an explicitly states that if two parties become actively hostile to each other, it is a duty enjoined on the Muslims to mediate and make every effort at reconciliation. If, after all these attempts, one of the contending parties becomes an aggressor or remains recalcitrant, it is enjoined on the Muslims to side with the party tyrannised over and use force conjointly to suppress the aggressor. The League of Nations and after that the United Nations adopted this principle only academically and hesitatingly with mental reservations. If international morality adopts this principle with a firm conviction and finds ways and means to realise it in practice, aggression could be speedily nipped in the bud and effectively crushed if it raises its head.

(21) The right of armed revolt by a group of citizens against even a tyrannical government is not conceded by Islam. This principle may give an unpleasant shock to revolutionary parties in all countries. But Islam being a practical religion, which values peace more than everything else, prohibits futile violence. An aggrieved party, if persecuted or discriminated against, should use all possible

means to get its wrongs righted, short of violence and armed revolt. All peaceful and constitutional methods should be tried in the first instance and if the party fails to secure elementary human rights for itself it should leave the domain of tyranny and seek shelter elsewhere. Revolt against an established government will lead to internecine warfare and the attempted remedy might prove worse than the disease. After moving outside the domain of a tyrannical state they should try to organise and strengthen themselves and seek the help of other justice-loving states to bring the tyrants to their senses. While living within a state as its subjects, Islam allows only constitutional methods to be adopted. Armed revolt within the state by helpless minorities upsets whatever law and order exists and gives a free reign to the men with brutal and criminal tendencies to exploit the confusion to their own advantage, causing vandalism and rapine. Migration from tyrannical lands to more peaceful domains was an example set by the Prophet and has become a model for the Muslims for all times. But when Muslims are themselves organised into a powerful state, it is their duty to come to the aid of the oppressed, however or wherever they may be. Protection of virtue and suppression of vice, that manifests itself as oppression not only within the state but even outside it, is a duty enjoined on every Muslim individual and on every Muslim state. This does not mean that they must be going about in the world as censors of international morals and take their puritanical hordes from China to Peru to wage war against every state which is not living according to the Muslim moral code. A Muslim state is not allowed to interfere quixotically with the life of other nations and their codes of conduct, unless a nation becomes an obvious persecutor and suppressor of liberties, and a Muslim state, either by itself or in conjunction with other liberty-loving states, has the power to suppress persecution and restore the liberties of the people. Islam

considers religious liberty or the liberty of conscience to be an essential constituent of a civilised state, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

(22) Islam also visualised the possibility of Muslims living as subjects of non-Muslim states. For a community that had to spread all over the earth could not hope to live always under its own government. When the Muslims were compelled by persecution to migrate to Abyssinia, which was a Christian state, they were ordered to live there as law-abiding citizens, and as law-abiding citizens they gained the esteem of the court of Negus. A Muslim who lives as a citizen of a non-Muslim state has entered into a tacit contract with that government to abide by its laws; but in that contract he cannot jeopardise the essentials of Islam so far as his personal life is concerned. Islam lays great stress on the fulfilment of covenants and treaties, even if they are in some respects unpalatable for the Muslims. There are numerous examples of such treaties entered into and adhered to in letter and spirit by the Prophet himself. 'The really successful Muslims are those who guard their covenants' (xxiii. 8). 'Fulfil your covenants' is an injunction oft-repeated. So long as the other party does not violate a covenant and does not intrigue openly or secretly to prepare for aggression against you, you are bound to fulfil the covenant even with the semi-barbarous polytheists. 'The polytheists with whom you have entered into a covenant and they have not violated any part of it, and they have not aided anyone against you, you are ordered to fulfil your covenant with them' (ix. 4). Whenever the Prophet sent out his troops, he specially impressed upon them the duty not to cheat and not to break any covenant. War is supposed to be a game of stratagem and deception and it is proverbial that as in love everything is fair in war, meaning thereby that all fundamental rules of morality could be violated with impunity. Deceiving the enemy about your strength and

your intentions on the battlefield is a necessity of war but, outside that, Islam enjoins on its followers to adhere to fundamental human virtues even with a warring opponent. Perfidy and breaking of a promise are not allowed under any circumstances. All Muslim jurists are agreed on this point. There was a case during the reign of Khalifa `Umar when a single Muslim, who was not authorised, promised a beleaguered enemy garrison safety of life and property, if they surrendered. When the Muslim troops wanted to lay hands on them, they produced the promise offered them by a Muslim individual. The Khalifa ratified the promise, saying that, although the man was not authorised, yet the promise of one of us shall be taken as a promise held out by a proper authority, as if it were authorised by the whole community. The same law that enjoins the keeping of covenants in war applies also to relations between Muslim subjects and non-Muslim states. *Hidaya,* the famous book of Muslim law and jurisprudence, expressly states: `Whenever a Muslim enters a non-Muslim state it is enjoined on him to respect the life and property of its inhabitants, because he has, tacitly entered into a covenant that he would do so.'

We have dealt briefly with the fundamentals of a Muslim state. Some fundamentals of economic welfare and some essentials of war and peace are given as the basic elements of the constitution. They are the essentials of what the Muslim calls *Shari'at* or the Islamic law. But legislation is a far wider thing than merely the fundamentals of a constitution. It is a matter of vital importance to understand the attitude of Islam to legislation that must suit time and circumstances and must vary from nation to nation and from epoch to epoach. Here we enter an extremely controversial ground. All progressive nations must adapt their laws to changing situations. Does Islam give a code that is unchangeable like the proverbial laws of the `Medes and Persians'?

Ever since Mulsim states became stagnant some such view began to be held by the learned orthodoxy as well as by the ignorant masses, and western critics began to express the opinion that the rigidity of Muslim law was the chief obstacle in its progressive adaptation to new circumstances. There is a good deal of truth in this criticism but the blame cannot be laid at the door of Islam. When Islam was a living force and moulded a whole civilisation according to its spirit, free legislation was attempted by great jurists and different Muslim states continued to remould their economic and social life as the changing circumstances demanded. Islam originally had brought no extensive and comprehensive code of laws with it; it gave only the fundamentals of civilised life which could secure for the individual and society total well-being. The most authoritative, if not the only authoritative, book is the Qur'an, but in the entire holy Book, the code of laws would not cover more than ten pages. So Islam is really not burdened with a heavy code which by its immutability could stand in the way of any progressive legislation. A small scripture like the Qur'an could deal only with the fundamentals of life. Besides emphasis on faith in the unity of God and exhorting man to give up the worship of all gods and idols and stick to the worship of the one ideal source of existence who is creator and preserver of all values and is to be worshipped in spirit and not in graven or mental images, and besides exhorting man to practise social justice and personal purity, there is little in the Qur'an which is given as a set of unchangeable eternal laws. It is mostly a book of basic principles, some of which were applied to the circumstances as they arose. It is the principles that are eternal and not their temporal application. The Prophet himself and his immediate successors varied the application of these fundamental principles as the circumstances changed, but always within the framework of the essentials

of Islam because they had fully imbibed the spirit of Islam. The later jurists had to elaborate the science of jurisprudence and also to compile comprehensive codes to deal with actual or hypothetical cases. These schools of jurisprudence, later on became the backbone of Muslim orthodoxy and were considered as fixed and immutable as the essentials of Islam itself. Such fossilised orthodoxies are the result of the political stagnation of the Muslim states when all creative genius, adaptive urge and free inquiry were curbed by autocratic un-Islamic rule and dynastic struggles.

As already mentioned, Islam did chalk out a system of life and there was hardly any essential phase of life which it left untouched. Besides essential religious belief, the fundamentals of social, economic and political existence were taught and practised and an actual powerful state founded on them. If the Islamic system were a closed system, instead of an open system, the progressive Muslim civilisation, which led the world in all cultural phases for centuries, could never have come into being. When Islam was a living force it formulated principles of jurisprudence which left a large latitude for free legislation. If this latitude had not been there in the spirit of Islam itself, Muslim culture would have stagnated very soon. Let us state briefly the principles of Islamic jurisprudence to know how much freedom it fosters.

There is no doubt that the ultimate source of Islam is revelation; like all great religions it recognises a suprasensual and supraratational perception of verities. But the distinctive feature of Islam is that it identifies this revelation with nature and reason. All nature is a revelation and is guided by revelation; nature is itself a cosmic scripture; even the animal instincts are identified with revelation as the Qur'an says God revealed it to the bee to

build its hive. The revelation in the Qur'an points to reason and to nature as guides to the understanding of the truths that are supraratíonally revealed. According to the Qur'an , revelation does not supersede reason but strengthens and supports it and leads it from the seen towards the unseen. Almost after every injunciton or enunciation of a principle, the Qur'an adds, 'You would know the truth of it if you think aright.' The oft-repeated exhortation is: `Why do not you ponder, why do not you reflect?' So the Qur'anic revelation is not a revelation of mysteries; Islam is the most unmysterious of all religions. It has no dogma except faith in the unity of God Who reveals Himself in nature and reason and pre-eminently in the lives of the saints and the prophets who are all agreed in the fundamentals of the faith. After the rules explicitly given by the Qur'an and the Prophet, the entire body of laws and regulations is, therefore, to be logically derived from the essentials of Islam. Islam is theocratic only in the sense that its fundamentals are believed to be God-given. But God, Who gave man reason and created an ordered nature, left him free to raise the superstructure of rules of conduct, as varying situations demanded. So, very early, the principles of logical reasoning and analogical deduction were adopted by Muslim jurisprudence under the terminology of *istinbat* which literally means digging out and bringing forth water, and *ijtihad* and *istikhara* which mean logical and analogical deduction.

The holy Prophet was quite aware of the fact that no code could be comprehensive enough to cover all the multifarious situations of life. Human beings are endowed with reason and that requires to be exercised, developed, and moralised. Even a moral code coud not be comprehensive enough to deal with the infinite variety of human situations; any attempt at covering the details of applied morality results in casuistry which often leads to the

reductio ad absurdum of moral principles. He was averse to the multiplication of regulations. It is related in a well-authenticated Hadith that he was very angry with a man who pestered him about details of what is lawful and what is unlawful to be eaten. He said, `Do not put me questions unnecessarily and be content with what God has allowed or forbidden. I am afraid, any answer that I give to your questions would become binding on the followers of Islam and thus curtail their liberties in the spheres of life that have been left free for rational judgment'. Such a questioner would indirectly do injustice to human liberty; and he added that former nations were crushed by a spate of regulations which were the result of too much questioning and inquisitiveness. Here we see a clear example of the founder of a unique theocratic system who desired to remain content with the broadest principles and a few applications as examples and wanted to leave the rest of changing and developing life free to be moulded according to the basic principles of morality and reason. There are a number of sayings of the Prophet and verses of the Qur'an which form the bases of logical or analogical deduction. 'On being appointed governor of Yaman, Mu`adh was asked by the holy Prophet as to the rules by which he should abide. He replied, "By the law of the Qur'an." "But if you do not find any direction therein?" asked the Prophet. "Then I will act according to the *Sunna* of the Prophet," was the reply. "But if you do not find any direction in the *Sunna?*" he was again asked. "Then I will use *ijtihad* or exercise my judgement and act on that," came the reply. The Propeht approved of it and blessed him.' It is related about a similar inquiry that the Prophet advised the man to consult his own heart, that is to say, his own reason and conscience in coming to a decision. It shows that during the very lifetime of the Prophet, *ijtihad* was freely resorted to by his companions, whenever necessary. Ignorance of the actual

historical background led the later generations into the wrong belief that *ijtihad* was exercised by only the great jurists or Imams whose schools of jurisprudence became later on hardened into canonical orthodoxy. Governors were sent all over by the Prophet himself and it was humanly impossible to refer every case to the Prophet. As the domain of Islam extended to a large part of the civilised world within a very short time after the Prophet, wider legislation became more and more necessary. Populations and wide domains, with widely different modes of life, were incorporated into the body politic of Islam and legislation multiplied. Laws grew and changed with changing situations. But the fundamental principles of Islam always formed the basis. There are numerous instances in the lives of the early Khalifas in which they exercised their own judgement in a way that appear to contravene even an injunction given in the very text of the Qur'an. When other civilised nations inflicted capital punishment on the thief, Islamic practice was only to cut one of his hands. But once during a famine `Umar ordered that a thief's hand shall not be cut because the conditions were abnormal. `Umar's rule is full of cases in which he deviated from the ordinary law and practice because according to him circumstances demanded modification or abeyance of a rule. He refused to distribute the land of the conquered countries among the Muslim conquerors. Some companions of the Prophet quoted the example of tribal warfare in which sometimes the land of the vanquished enemy was confiscated and distributed. They thought that 'Umar was introducing an innovation and was violating the accepted rule. But he stuck to his opinion that tribal warfare was different from the conquest of civilised countries with settled governments, and refused to grant land to any Muslim solider.

We see thus that Muslim law is fixed as well as free. Only certain general principles which follow from the

Islamic outlook on life are fixed. Their abstract nature has been made concrete by application to certain actual situations. But it is not so much the form as the spirit that matters. *Shari'at* that forms the invariable basis of Muslim law and morality is really the specification of certain fundamentals. Any rigidity that woud hamper free development of a nation towards the realisation of the spirit of Islam belongs less to Islam itself than to juristical orthodoxy which ceased to be progressive when Muslim society became stagnant after centuries of progressive life.

Adverse criticism of Islam itself is self-contradictory. One type of critic asserts that Islam spread through the world like wild fire because its morality and law were much too pliable and lax and all sorts of inhibited impulses of humanity found a free vent in it and a justification that had been denied by other religions. The other type of critic says that Islam was a steel jacket and wanted to stretch humanity on its rigid Procrustean bed and, therefore, ceased to advance with changes in the economic and political situation. But all such accusations are the product of ignorance and prejudice and are not borne out by historical facts. The real spirit of a creed is found in its initial and creative periods. The initial centuries of Islam were its creative centuries and if a tree is known by its fruit, the cultural legacy of Islam to humanity must be studied. Islam taught that humanity must overstep the bounds of racialism and nationalism. To prove my thesis in this respect let me quote from a great Christian authority, W.R. Inge, the Dean of St.Paul. He says:

`The religious tie which binds the Muslims together is felt to be stronger than any merely political allegiance. Racialism also has been overcome by this religion and to a

large extent class differences also; so that a low-caste Hindu has everything to gain by becoming a Mussalman?*

Although I do not agree with this writer on his evaluation of Islam in certain other matters, yet this outspoken appreciation of certain historical facts is valuable: coming as it does from the pen of a great Christian dignitary of the church. Let me quote further:

'The Arabs were not at first eager to proselytise; though they undoubtedly wished to put an end to paganism, they were not intolerant to Christianity and treated the Jews much better than they were treated by Christians at the same period. The effects of that wonderful century of expansion have left a deep mark on history to this day; but we must never make the mistake of holding the Muhammadan religion responsible for the barbarities of the horde of Tartars, who unhappily succeeded the Arabs as the chief representative of the Islamic peoples'.

In criticising Islam, sometimes even intellectually actue writers like Dean Inge unconsciously involve themselves in contradictions. He understands rightly that Islamic jurisprudence is theocratic, as it undoubtedly is, because of deriving its laws from God Who enjoins the concrete ideals of social justice. But as all sorts of ideologies are lumped together under the conception of a secular state, so various, and even contradictory, ideologies are all stamped together as theocracies. Theocracy, in its widely accepted sense, is supposed to be rigid and unassimilative; if it is liberally assimilative of the cultural heritage of humanity, wherever it is discovered or contacted, the charge of unprogressive rigidity is wiped out by its open-hearted assimilation of all truth whenever found.

* *Outspoken Essays,* p. 70
Outspoken Essays, pp. 70, 71.

The Prophet said about knowledge in general that it is the lost camel of a Muslim; he can capture and own it wherever he finds it. Knowledge of all kinds is a universal human heritage; truth is not the monopoly of any nation. There is a famous saying of the Prophet: `Seek knowledge even if you have to travel to find it in China.' In his *Essay on the State, Visible and Invisible*, the Dean analyses various good and bad attributes of theocracies as they developed in various religions and civilisations. But he had to confess about Islam that in this respect Islam was an exception:

'The attitude of conscientious scorn and abhorrence for other nations and their customs makes it almost impossible for a theocratic nation to learn anything from other peoples. This does not apply to the Saracens, who were more ready to assimilate Graeco-Roman culture than the Christian peoples of the West during the Dark Ages'.

The adverse critics of Islam try to seek the cause of this liberality and progressiveness in elements other than the spirit of Islam itself. Some seek the reasons in expanding Arabic nationalism and others like the present-day Communists try to explain away everything by economic factors. M.N. Roy's brochure on Islam tries to dig out economic factors only. Even Christianity, too, is being explained away in this way. When they find Muslim peoples stagnant at a particular epoch they want to convince the world that it is the rigidity of theocratic Islam which has made them stagnant. For fossilisation Islam is blamed and for the progressive and creative centuries of Islam, factors others than Islam are unearthed. This is surely a very unfair way of evaluating the contribution of a great culture and does grave injustice to Islam. It is a fundamental thesis of Islam that all true religion is meant to emancipate mankind and break the shackles of superstition and social tyranny. The Preamble to the American Declaration of Independence

really repeated the Islamic thesis that man is born free but is everywhere in chains. The great Islamic Sufi, Rumi, says that prophets are commissioned to make men free. Islam sanctified all human instincts but prescribed limits to their action. Morality and legality are, therefore, termed in the Qur'an by the appropriate epithet: `limits of God', and religion is defined as a creator of healthy conveniences for man. The Prophet said, `Out of two alternatives choose the more convenient one, provided it is not a sin.' The spread of Islam in Africa during the last century is explained by Christian missionaries as a result of adaptation to the primitive cultures of African peoples. A creed that could adapt itself to the highest cultures that the world has seen, and appeal to a part of the Persian and Graeco-Roman world, could by no means be blamed as a rigid, unadaptive theocracy. If the God of Islam is very liberal to all types of humanity, is it praiseworthy or blameworthy? It all depends on the standpoint you adopt. Deussen, the great German historian of philosophy and a profound scholar of Sanskrit, had become a believer in Vedanta and Buddhistic metaphysics. He had become incapable of understanding or appreciating the spirit of Islam like Schopenhauer who was similarly influenced by the doctrines of negation of will and the desire to end the illusion of existence. Deussen says about Islam that it should not be called a religion because it asserts the reality of life and the world and sanctifies human instincts and desires while, according to him, all true religion or metaphysics must draw men away from them. According to him, Islam is not a religion at all, because it is so much earth-rooted.

The theocratic basis of Islamic jurisprudence should not, therefore, scare away the progressive rationalists who really hunger and thirst after social justice and the gradual creation of a classless society. The Qur'an teaches only fundamentals of morality and social justice and ordains it as

a duty to wage war only against persecution or intolerance. The Qur'an is the real basis of Islamic life and its actual legislation is very limited. Muslims are free to legislate as needs arise, in the spirit of social justice. The few laws in the Qur'an are often permissive and give large latitudes to suit any change in circumstances. Its theocratic basis grants equal civil liberties to the non-Muslims who live as loyal subjects of a Muslim state; their personal laws are respected and even a Muslim judge must decide the cases of non-Muslims according to their own laws, provided they do not violate the general principles of social justice on which all law and order are based.

Religion, as understood by Islam, is different in certain essentials from religion as commonly interpreted by other orthodoxies; so its theocratic basis too assumes quite a different complexion. As it is already stated, outside the limited number of laws given in the Qur'an and the well-established practice of the Prophet in dealing with different situations as they arose in his lifetime, his companions were encouraged to use their own judgment in legislating in circumstances that had no precedent. After the Prophet, the Khalifas, when in doubt, gathered those who were in a position to understand correctly the spirit of Islam in a common consultation and accepted the best view that emerged, even if it went against their own opinion. The principle of governance by a council was enunciated clearly by the Qur'an and the Prophet was divinely ordered to consult his companions in all vital matters. The Prophet, who was in the best position to be a dictator, was ordered by God not to act as one however wiser he may be than others, because that would set a bad precedent for humanity and hamper the establishment of democracy which was one of the chief aims of Islam. The great Khalifas were sometimes criticised and corrected even by ordinary women and they thanked God that such a spirit existed among the

commmon masses. Honest difference of opinion was respected. The four great jurists or Imams, whose systems of jurisprudence later on hardened into Sunni orthodoxies, freely differed among themselves. In spite of their differences they all receive the veneration that they deserve for having freely applied the principles of Islam according to their lights to the situations with which they had to deal. The scope of free legislation is far more extensive than the laws and rules one finds in the Qur'an and the *Sunna*; as even in the early primitive conditions of life in tribal Arabia, the Prophet himself realised that numerous cases could arise in the day-to-day dealings of men which would not be covered either by the Qru'an or by the *Sunna* and, therefore, he exhorted people to exercise their own judgment in such cases. The sphere of *ijtihad* is, therefore, unlimited as permutations and combinations of human situations are unlimited; it seeks to fulfil all the requirements of the Muslim community which are not met with in the holy Qur'an and the Hadith. The great *Mujtahids* of Islam have endeavoured to meet these demands by various methods technically known as *qiyas* (analogical reasoning), *istihsan* (equity) and *istislah* (public good). And towering above all is the great foundation of democrary, *ijma'* (the consensus of opinion of those who are endowed with knowledge). Decision by raising of hands and counting the votes of the ignorant and the wrong-doers alike, each one to count for one and nobody as more than one, has no place in Islam, so far as the framing of essential legislation is concerned. All must be equal before the law, but all could not be equal in framing the law. Framing of a just law is the concern, the right and the duty of men of knowledge and integrity; it should not become the ignoble game of party politics where legislation is proposed or opposed in order to maintain the strength of a party or to dislodge from power a ruling clique. *Ijma'* or the consensus of the community is a vital

principle in Islamic jurisprudence but any democracy, if it claims to be Islamic, would be of a different type from both the Biritish and the Russian patterns, the one based on the clash of two or more parties and the other based on the monopoly of power by a single party, which can brook no opposition. If an Islamic state forms an assembly or a parliament based on Islamic principles, there is no danger of its becoming a congregation of the priests because Islam recognises no official priesthood. Islamic society is a classless society; there is no church and no classes with special privileges or interests. But there must be a method of choosing the people of learning, intelligence and character. Money must not play any part in politics, otherwise it would become democracy in name and plutocracy in practice. An Islamic democracy should create its own distinctive system; no slavish and blind imitation of any existing system, claiming to be a democracy, would accord with the spirit of Islam. Plato wanted to create a caste of intellectual and moral aristocrats to legislate justly and rule selflessly. Plato's caste was never created and remained a pattern in his ideational heaven. The system that actually experimented with the creation of castes was the Hindu system, whose greatest evils of social tyranny and inequality sprung from the experiment, which degenerated into class-exploitation and suppression of human liberties in the vilest manner. Islam was dead set against the creation of castes; it recognised wide differences among individuals; superior individuals could emerge from any family and from any group. There is no heredity in the realm of the spirit; the spirit bloweth whither it pleaseth. In Islamic democracy, where consensus of opinion should regulate the destinies of society, only such have the right to guide and rule who are gifted with knowledge as well as character. How to choose an assembly of such *elite* is a problem that is agitating the minds of all true lovers of social justice but no nation

whether Muslim or non-Muslim has yet succeeded in discovering a workable *modus operandi*. Political problems of the Islamic community along with its social, moral and economic problems were solved by the Prophet, the great creative genius, and for some time after him by those who were inspired by his precept and example and were completely imbued with the spirit of Islam. But with the phenomenal spread of Islam to distant regions and different cultural groups the task of governing democratically became extremely difficult, if not impossible. Ever since that time no Muslim state, however glorious in the achievements of civilisation, was able to solve this propblem. Muslims continued to hold it as a faith that a true Islamic society must be socialistic and democratic, and absolute monarchy is un-Islamic, but history was not yet prepared for the political realisation of the Islamic ideal; the early few years of Islam remained only a sacred memory and an ideal to cherish, with little hope of realisation until humanity advances towards it by evolution or by revolution.

That even great Khalifas like al-Mamun, the son and successor of the famous Harun al-Rashid, had doubts about the legitimacy of their claims, is shown by an incident in his life. A Beduin Arab walked straight into al-Mamun's court unceremoniously and while he was being stopped by the guards and courtiers, the Khalifa himself espied him and ordered the guards to let him walk up to the throne. He addressed the Khalifa by his name using no honorific titles and said curtly that he wanted a question to be answered. Al-Mamun having allowed him to do so, he asked the Khalifa as to who had appointed him the head of the Muslim state. He inquired if he stepped on to the throne of his own will or was elected by consensus of the Muslim nation. The Khalifa, known for his patient temperament and philosophical outlook, answered that neither was the fact. He said, 'The actual situation is that my father happened to

be the chief of the state and when he died, leaving a large realm to be administered, his mantel naturally fell on me and I had to shoulder this responsibility in the absence of anyone who could be elected by a consensus. Plebiscite of the learned is the right method but it was not easy to secure it. Now I appoint you an agent for this purpose; go through the entire Islamic realm and secure a consensus in favour of someone. Whoever he may be, I will abdicate in his favour'. The Beduin left the court satisfied or perhaps nonplussed by the answer and that was the end of the matter. The world was not advanced enough to create the conditions for a socialistic republic and the ideal had to be kept in abeyance till history had run through many more epochs. Some of the Muslim states now are in a position to do it. Could they create a state on the Islamic model or would they do it? The future is in the womb of time; who knows what it will bring forth? But Islam presented for a time the model and set the ideal of a socialistic republic. The aspiration is there and must act as a perpetual inspiration.

It is said that theocracies, creating stable organisations, become ultimately unprogressive and hide-bound. The fixity of laws, customs and traditions is a good sheet-anchor for society up to a certain limit and for a particular epoch; then their unreceptivity and rigidity create obstacles to change and progress. History offers numerous examples that prove the turth of this assertion. How beautifully has Tennyson pointed out the laws of change and progress in the name of God Himself: `Old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfils Himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should currupt the world'. Then in the opening stanzas of his great poem *In Memoriam*, he talks of the transitoriness of all systems: `They have their day and cease to be; They are but broken lights of Thee. And Thou, O Lord, are more than they'. Stagnation must be the fate of all closed systems of law. When Muslims, on

account of centuries of autocratic, dynastic rule and general insecurity, became unprogressive, Islam became for them a closed system of law and great jurists came to be venerated like infallible popes. They flagrantly violated the spirit of Islam which had not only shown such plasticity and receptivity when it was in the progressive and creative stage, but had formulated principles of legislation that could have kept the Muslim states adaptive to circumstances and in the vanguard of civilisation.

Having mentioned consensus or the will of the people whose opinion should count, on account of knowledge and character, which creates a large scope for the sovereignty of the people, we proceed to mention in brief the other principles of progressive legislation. We start with *qiyas* which means judgment by comparison, analogy and deduction. It has been defined as a process of deduction by which the law of a text is applied to cases which, though not covered by the language, are governed by the reason of the text. *Qiyas* accepts the essential principle of all rational jurisprudence that no law stands by itself; it is not an entity *sui generis* and is always based on some reason or motive. In Islamic jurisprudence, it is a technical term, meaning reasoning based on analogy. When cases come up that could not be covered by presoribed texts, decision is arrived at on the basis of analogy. However great the Imam or jurist, no infallibility is claimed for such rulings. Any jurist may err or disagree and there is always room for the coming generations to apply analogical deductions to new circumstances in the manner which they consider to be more reasonable. The doctors of law differ among themselves as much as other doctors and Islam would not recognise any church claiming infallibility and implicit obedience. What a large scope it offers for progressive legislation!

The next principle of Islamic Jurisprudence is *istihsan*, which literally means preferring a regulation because of its obvious goodness or justice. Public good and interests of justice are recognised as principles of legislation. This is what British jurists like Bentham insisted upon to be recognised as a foundation of all legislation. The utilitarain principle is assumed to be a basis of all Islamic laws and the Qur'an often discusses the personal or social benefits of a regulation before ordaining it as law. According to the Hanafi system, the demands of justice must supersede any analogical deduction, if the latter would cause undue inconvenience or injury. The jurist is at liberty to adopt a rule which would be more conducive to public good and would be consonant with those broad principles of justice which form the essence of Islam. Orthodoxy felt that the theocratic basis of legislation would be jeopardised if this principle is freely applied. Imam Abu Hanifa's system, the most liberal of all Sunni juristical systems, is the only system which recognises it, but the other great jurists are afraid of subscribing to it. Even the Hanafi system has not applied it as freely as it could, perhaps because it felt the need of proceeding very cautiously and because the stability of law sometimes appears to be more important than frequent changes in laws and regulations. But Islamic society, when it becomes more alive to the changing conditions of life, will make more and more use of this excellent principle, which is in strict accordance with the spirit of the holy Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet. The other great jurist, Imam Malik, adopts a similar principle under the term *istislah* which is a near equivalent of *istihsan*, and means deductions of law based on public welfare. So, both these great Imams accept the fundamental Islamic principle that general well-being and social justice are the foundations of legislation.

Another principle of jurisprudence, specially emphasised by the Hanafi system, is *istidlal* which literally

means only syllogistic reasoning and inference, but has technically been restricted chiefly to recognition of customs and usages prevailing in a community before Islam or the laws of religions revealed before Islam. Islam was first promulgated in Arabia which regulated its life according to a number of time-honoured customs. All communities, civilised or uncivilised, are held together chiefly by the force of customs and usages. No revolution can change entirely the modes of life of any nation. If any revolution ever attempted at the maximum practicable overhauling of the social heredity of peoples, it was Islam. Life after Islam, among the Arabian tribes, was changed so much in its essentials that the pre-Islamic days were termed the days of ignorance and it was customary with the early followers of Islam to compare the two modes of life. But, which reformer would consider it desirable or practicable to change all the former modes of life of a people? Customs and modes of life that have become the warp and woof of a social fabric could never be entirely wiped out, and it is not desirable that they should be uprooted completely. Societies thrive by continuity as well as change; conservatism in some respects is perhaps as good a factor in social stability and well-being as change and progress. Whoever compares the Islamic law and practice with the Arabian modes of life before Islam can see clearly how much of pre-Islamic Arabia survived in the Muslim community. Even in the most ignorant and the most depraved society all customs and traditions are not bad. Some usages are good, some are bad and others are indifferent. Any effective reform has to uproot the bad, but it must at the same time uphold and even strengthen the good, and let alone the indifferent. Jurists began to hold the opinion that customs and usages which prevailed in Arabia at the advent of Islam, and which were not abrogated, had the force of law. About the customs and usages of other nations the principle was

adopted that what was not expressly forbidden by Islam was admissible and permissible, according to the well-known juristic maxim that permissibility is the original principle and what has not been expressly forbidden is permissible. Such a sanction is ultimately based on the principle of consensus and has preference over laws derived by analogy. The Hanafi system had in view the life of the non-Arab communities and hence it is this system which laid a special stress on this principle.

But the question arises: Why should any distinction be made between pre-Islamic Arabian usages and the customs of other nations who accepted Islam later? The Propeht had laid special stress on this fundamental principle of Islam--that Islam is not bound with any territory or any nation. In his last sermon he emphasised the point that an Arab has no inherent superiority over the non-Arab. If this is true, then Arabian customs have no intrinsic preference over non-Arabian customs. `Superiority or inferiority lies only in the character of the individuals.' Islam does not recognise any racial or national superiority. According to this vital principle of impartiality among the nations, the modes of life and special usages of all nations must be equally respected provided they do not run counter to the fundamentals of Islam. *Istidlal* recognises the principle of nationality in the only sense in which it is admissible by Islam.

After having surveyed in brief the basic principles of an Islamic state and the fundamentals of its juristical principles, we must revert to the question of theocracy *versus* a secular state. We have seen that undefined terms lead us nowhere. There have been theocracies of all types and secular states too of divers complexions. Their relative evaluation should depend ultimately on their ideologies. Almost all ancient states, with the exception of the Greek

city-states, were theocracies of one type or the other. All Hindu civilisations and polity were theocratic. The Jewish state was a theocratic state and, although neither Buddha nor Christ gave the basis for the foundation of a state, Asoka based his polity on Buddhistic principles, and Christianity, when it got hold of secular power, founded a worldwide theocracy in which the two swords, the spiritual and the temporal, were supposed to be wielded by the same authority; all Christian kings had to pay homage to the Pope who became the infallible source of all Christian legislation and claimed to regulate Christian lives down to the details of conduct. The clash between the church and the state in the West has had a chequered history. Religion became so obscurantist and reactionary and allied itself with such sinister movements that rational humanity, demanding freedom of conscience and social justice, began to crave for emancipation from the clutches of a strangling theocracy. The period of the dominance of theocracy coincides with what is called the Dark Ages. Europe began to breathe freely when the stranglehold of the church was loosened. Organised religions and priesthoods, forming themselves into church and privileged caste of priests, have always obstructed the free development of humanity. Rationalist Europe developed its science and regulated its life freely when the separation of church and state was accomplised. In the French Revolution there was a terrible rage against the church and people wanted to be ruled by reason only and by the principles of liberty, fraternity and equality. In the Russian Revolution we see atheism rampant and an active anti-God campaign. All these reactions have their justification because the organised church had always sided with autocracy and social injustice and upheld the domination of class by class. But the gains of the West in getting emancipated from the church did not prove to be an unmixed good. The eighteenth century developed

nationalism to replace catholic centralism and church domination. The church had asked them to look to the other world and leave this world to be exploited by the rich and the privileged who will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. But now nationalism in its secularity began to worship mammon instead of a perverted conception of religion. Mammon proved to be even a more corrupt deity than the one that the church had compelled them to worship. The secular states entered into commercial competition by sweating their workers and suppressing their liberties, granting them an ineffective political democracy coupled with economic exploitation and wage-slavery. Secularism running riot worshipped only money and power. Science was used to increase production without benefiting the producers. The ideal of all secular states was more markets, more colonies, more clamouring for raw material and cheap labour. A double standard of morality arose; all moral values were meant for the individuals only in their small social circles; they were not valid between the competing capitalists or between capital and labour. Secular states adopted *laissez-faire* economics; capital was worshipped by individual capitalists as well as the capitalistic state, and economic power backed by armaments became the driving urge and the *summum bonum* of all secularism. The states, having got rid of the church which was a source of impediments to free progress, were gripped by a diabolical urge for power. Nationalism and patriotism were exploited in the interest of exploiting classes or to strengthen the state which replaced God as an object of worship. The remedy became worse than the disease and western nations jumped from the frying pan of reactionary theocracy to the fire of power for the sake of power. The Devil occupied the seat vacated by God.

The worship of the state which was used as a comouflage by the privileged classes was supported by all

sorts of philosophies and ideologies. Hegel had exalted the state as the highest manifestation of the Absolute. Fichte had preached the divine mission of the German nation. Nietzsche had talked of power as the ultimate value. Darwinian evolutionism came handy as an intellectual support for the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Ruthless and unscrupulous competition between individuals and between states was preached, not only as the law of a blind mechanistic nature, but as a divine scheme of things for the amelioration of humanity. It became right to exploit the weak; for the states it was might that created all rights.

In this general clamour for power all Muslim states were pushed to the wall. Nationalism and capitalism had never existed in Muslim society, and the mighty irrational urges released by them and let loose on humanity were alien to the spirit of Islām. The autocratic monarchies in the Muslim states had become utterly degenerate. They were un-Islmaic states which could neither organise themselves on the Islamic pattern nor benefit by applied science and industrialism. They were theocratic only in form or verbal assertion, but were autocratic and un-Islamic in reality. They were neither theocratic in the Islamic sense nor secular in the sense of being power-seeking states. They got the worst of both the worlds.

In this general stagnation, thinking individuals all over the Muslim world were bewildered. They had dragged on by the mere force of inertia for centuries but now they were thoroughly shaken. They had developed neither secular ideologies to take part in this competition for power nor had the spirit of Islamic solidarity which could create moral stamina and social cohesion for the purposes of self-preservation. The adverse critics of Islam began to blame Islam itself for this lack of progressiveness. Muslim thinkers

themselves diagnosed the disease diversely and suggested different remedies. Some thought that indiscriminate imitation of the West would put them on a level with the western countries. They believed that some fundamental changes in the economics and politics of Islam were necessary; they must fall in line with progressive nations. Religion must become rationalised according to the science of the nineteenth century and the states must be secularised. There were others who sincerely believed that the fundamentals of Islam were sound and were necessary for the creation of a stable state and a just humanity. Islam not only not prevented scientific research and its application to life but in its essential spirit made it a duty for the Muslims to study nature in order to control it. They also believed that there was something inherently sinister in nationalism and capitalism, and the nations living on these ideologies were heading for a catastrophe.

Muslim states were overwhelmed by western powers and were all, directly or indirectly, controlled by them. Internal degeneration had already weakened them and now their freedom of thought and action was further restricted by foreign control of their destinies. Degenerate theocracy had something to do with their weakness but did not constitute the whole cause. They had lost grip on realities. The two great wars shook the entire world to its foundations and made possible a great awakening. The clash of European powers offered them an opportunity to breathe and there was a comparative release of thought and action. Some Muslim states have become politically free and others have achieved partial control of their own affairs and some others are still struggling against western imperial powers which are loth to loosen their grip. But to some extent, politically as well as economically, they are still entangled with the power politics of western nations. Only Turkey has declared itself to be a secular state; others are

attempting a compromise between theocracy and secularism.

The division of the world into two conflicting ideologies has created new problems for every nation. There is capitalistic democracy on the one hand and Communism on the other. Every state now is compelled to make a choice; it is said that every state must align itself with the one or the other group. This has set thinkers in all Muslim states vigorously thinking about these alternatives. Shall the Muslims align themselves with the one or the other or have they got a third alternative of their own? Must Islam be led like dumb-driven cattle or has it anything in its distinctive spirit to suggest a third way of life? Anglo-American democracies claim to be guided by Christian ideology; their representative leaders have recently begun to lay special stress on it in order to contrast it with Communism. But the leaders of the West have ceased to believe in dogmatic Christianity and when they now talk of Christian ideology they mean only certain undefined principles of love and good-will. Further than that they do not want to define it, because it would entangle them in great difficulties; like all slogans they want to keep it vague so that everyone may give it the meaning that he chooses. They would repudiate the charge of being theocratic because theocracy had acquired a bad odour in the West. They maintain that they are secular democracies inspired by Christian ideology.

Communism is completely secular and avowedly atheistic. It started as a programme of economic reconstruction to distribute more evenly the products of labour, but from its very beginning it acquired an anti-religious bias. The church in Russia was the ally of Czardom and was the upholder of autocracy as well as class-privileges. Reaction against the reactionary church assumed the form of reaction against religion in general. Religion is

free in Russia in the sense that people can believe as they like and are free to go to the church or the mosque but the whole trend of education and state encouraged inculcation of atheism has brought up a generation for which reality is constituted only of economics and applied science. Entire life centres round production and distribution and the defence of Communism against actual and potential foes. Religion has no place in the actual lives of the people who wield power. The communist Party rules the state and it would be as difficult for a genuinely religious man to enter this party as for the camel to pass through the eye of the needle. So virtually there is no religious liberty and anyone aspiring to have any influence in the working of the state must proclaim his disbelief in all spiritual realities. Communistic economics has become the axis round which all human life has to revolve. It is an historical accident that economic reconstruction and social justice aiming at as much equality of opportunity as possible should get so thoroughly fused with an anti-religious metaphysics. Do they think that it is inherently impossible for a believer in God and immortality and suprasensible realities to create economic justice and equality of opportunity? Were the great prophets and saints upholders of capitalism and feudalism, or did they ever preach domination of class by class? Were they not fighters and martyrs for social justice and universal love of humanity? If belief in God, far from being a hindrance, was a source of strength for them in protesting against tyranny, why should atheism be considered now a *sine qua non* of social justice?

Of the two conflicting ideologies now presented before the world as the only two alternatives, as if they, between themselves, exhausted the possible schemes of life, Islam can choose neither. It possesses its own distinctive scheme of economic reconstruction and social justice. The Muslims are called in the Qur'an the `Nation of the Middle

Path' that should always choose the golden mean. Islam discourages capitalism and the plethoric concentration of capital in individual hands. It struck at the root of feudalism by prohibition of primogeniture which creates and preserves feudal estates. It prohibits living on interest which is the backbone of all capitalism. It gives control to the state for great affairs of public welfare, whatever form it might assume in changing circumstances. It does not recognise monarchical government. It does not envisage the establishment of a church as an organisation of priesthood. It enjoins government by the assembly of the wise and the just. It gives an elbow room for the initiative of the individual to earn by honest labour and trade. It does not envisage the monopoly of all trade and commerce by the state, nor does it prevent the state from taking in hand all that it considers essential for general welfare and public good. It grants freedom of conscience to all and respects differences of opinion, so much so that the Prophet said that difference of opinion is a blessing. It grants equal rights to all the citizens of a Muslim state irrespective of race or creed. It recognises natural inequalities, saying that all men are not born equal with equal endowments and aptitudes, but it creates no bars of castes and classes and races. By inculcation of charity and by a compulsory tax on capital it wants to offer to the *have-nots* a portion of the surplus of those who have. The `Nation of the Middle path' is not a theocratic state in a sense in which theocracy ever existed anywhere. It is theocracy only in this sense that it believes God to be the source and guarantee of social justice and it believes that the fundamentals of social justice and personal and social well-being are divinely revealed and eternally true. The Qur'an defines the essentials of religion as belief in a rational God and the basic virtues to be embodied in good deeds. Other theocracies were based on mysteries and dogmas and in the matter of civil rights discriminated

against those who did not subscribe to those beliefs. All the great Muslim states have always had non-Muslims holding many key posts in the government. A truly Muslm state would possess all the good qualities of a secular state without being secular in the modern sense. It would be theocratic without having the narrowness of outlook generally accociated with theocracies. A truly Muslim state would synthesise theocracy with healthy secularism as Islam has synthesised so many traits which were considered by the world to be contradictory and irreconcilable. The gap between this world and the life to come was successfully bridged by Islam. Religion was brought down from the heavens to the earth and life was defined as sowing and reaping both here and hereafter. Mere other-worldliness was repudiated as a way of life because well-being is to be attained firstly here and in this world. All reality is one and this world is already vitally linked with the worlds above and below it because there is only one Lord of all the worlds which are linked each to each by a golden chain of rationality and grace.

In reality, all ideologies have a metaphysical background. Naturalism or materialism or the cult of physical science as the ultimate explanation of all reality are as much metaphysical as any religion which is stigmatised as other-worldly or ultrarational. Why accuse religion only of creating a theocratic outlook when we have seen before our very eyes how systems originating in lust for power or economic reconstruction or the scientific explanation of interphenomenal relations, ultimately constitute themselves into creeds presuming to explain and direct all life? Narrowness of outlook is not a special evil which originates in theocracies only; non-religious ideologies too, believed as ultimate explanations of all reality, tend to become narrow, irrational, intolerant and fanatical and set up their own inquisitions and star chambers. The essential factor in

human progress and social well-being is the freedom of belief and absence of all penalisation and persecution merely on account of difference in beliefs. Western democracies have started a witch-hunt to persecute those who believe that Communism of one form or the other can make essential contributions to the rehabilitation of the economic chaos in which almost all western democracies are involved; and they accuse Communism of abrogating human liberties and intolerance of differences in ideologies. It is the kettle calling the pot black. They are all suffering from fear of one another, which generates hysterical intolerance and persecution. As already stated, Islam should not accept any of these alternatives; if it wants to make any positive contribution to humanity, it shoud experiment with its own ways. If Muslims are earnest, they can show a better way, because a better way was once shown to them.

Islam has the simplest and the most rational of all ideologies. It does not want all humanity to subscribe either to mechanistic materialism which is now metamorphosing itself to some sort of idealism or even hesitatingly advancing towards philosophical theism, nor to dialectical materialism of Marx and Lenin, which, like old theocracies, presumes to offer an explanation of not only changes in the modes of production and distribution but of everything in cosmology, biology, physical sciences, arts and ethics. Theocracies had often hindered the advancement of knowledge by presuming to know everything from the genesis and movements of stars and planets to the growth of plants and by presuming to guide human life in all its details. But, are not all non-religious ideologies doing the same thing in various degrees? Nazism, Fascism, Communism, Plutocratic democracies are all as fanatical as any fanatical creed that ever forcibly crushed human liberties. Islam has a definite outlook on life and is convinced of its truth; but it prohibits the suppression of other outlooks by force. Almost

throughout human history, from savage tribes to comprehensively organised cultures, religion covered almost all phases of life. So when the Qur'an enunciated the principle that there must not be any compulsion in religion, it really granted a general charter of freedom for all modes of life, to all nations and all creeds. There must be mutual respect for each other's creeds. We have already quoted verses of the Qur'an which deal with the necessity of a righteous warfare in defence of the weak and the oppressed and to abolish religious persecution. `Fight till persecution ceases'; `Fight to protect the women, the children and the weak'; `If God had not urged some people to fight the aggressors, the cloisters of the monks, the churches, the synagogues and the mosques in which the name of God is oft-repeated would have been demolished.' Although Islam was being taught to the Muslims primarily, the protection of their mosques was mentioned last and not first. This verse is a clear command to fight to crush persecution even when other religions are persecuted, because the persecution of one, if not prevented, would lead to the persecution of all. The Qur'an says: `Fight till the aggressor is crushed or submits and enters into a treaty to live in peace with others'. The Islamic view of international relations is that different ideologies could be permitted to follow their own ways of life on condition that there shall be no persecution. Islam visualises the possibility of different social, economic and religious orders living in peaceful relations with one another. No religion has a right to compel others at the point of the bayonet to subscribe to its creed. Liberty is the basis of all real values, material, intellectual moral or spiritual.

Such is the theocracy of Islam; it has a definite ideology and a definite set of principles which should regulate life. The foundation of its faith is belief in one good God Whose unity manifests itself as the unity of nature. All

knowledge is to be directed towards finding greater and greater unities in existence and the mutual connections and adaptations of natural phenomena. Islam has thereby identified scientific research with the seeking of God in His creation. It is not by miraculous inferences that God is best revealed; the common phenomena of nature, their regularity and their working for the preservation and amelioration of life are pointed out as the great signs of God. The most spiritual man is one who ponders over them the most, because it is by this study that secrets of existence are revealed. The Qur'an says that the common and the obvious ought to be more convincing than the miracles that people demand. Belief in such a unifying and preserving some of existence is the only belief that Islam considers to be the essence of truth and of all true religions. It often couples it with virtuous deeds as the minimum requirements of well-being, but virtue is more of a corollary of the basic belief than something externally tacked on to it. The Prophet said that a sincere belief in the unity of God is enough to save man. At this his companion Abu Dhar was astounded that religion should be reduced to such a minimum. But the Prophet obviously meant that degree of belief which Socrates characterised as the rational and true knowledge of the good which must result in good deeds if the self is completely steeped in it and identified with it. The Qur'an has bestowed full-hearted praise on the followers of other religious systems who have these essentials in themselves, that they believe in one God and are just and good in their lives. The Jews and the Christians and even the Sabians are included as having been saved beyond fear and grief, if they possess these essentials.

Islam, however, did not content itself with the mere enunciation of a fundamental principle; it applied that principle to concrete life and showed the ways as to how it should work. It gave Muslims the ideal of a state as a

socialistic and democratic structure; but its socialism and democracy would be of a type different from the western democracies in many respects. It would never accept dialectical materialism as the ultimate explanation of all reality and as a substitute for God. It woud tend towards the levelling of society economically by taking away surplus wealth and spreading it over the whole community. It would grant equal freedom of conscience to all citizens and respect their modes of life, if they do not violate the fundamentals of social justice. All knowledge would be free and there shall be no professional priests or an organised church; so the problems of church *versus* the state would not arise. Essentials of legislation shall be derived from the basic principles of the Qur'an and the practice followed by the Prophet; otherwise almost the entire field of legislation shall be left unhampered, to be moulded as circumstances demand by men of knowledge who know and can evaluate the actualities of a situation. Legislation shall proceed according to the principles of logical and analogical deduction and the demands of public welfare and an assembly of the learned shall, by a practical consensus, legislate for all changing situations. Usages and customs of all communities shall have the force of law, if they do not violate the fundamentals of Islam and do not cause injury and injustice. All communities living in a Muslim state shall enjoy equal civil rights. The reign of law shall not be a respecter of persons. All privileges shall be abolished; there shall be no privileged classes or individuals; mankind shall not be cut up into castes and classes with special rights or invidious distinctions. Such is the theocracy of Islam which is not to be identified with any theocracy that ever existed. Call it a theocracy or call it a secular state as you please: it synthesises the virtues of both repudiating the evils with which they often get contaminated.

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Chapter 13

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IDEOLOGIES

MARXISM

Here is a presentation of Marxism in the words of the Marxists themselves:

(1) All existence is a process of dialectical materialism. It is the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis materialised. Conflict of the thesis and the antithesis, in other words, struggle or conflict, is the inevitable fact in the universe; their mutual action and reaction creates a synthesis. All creation, therefore, is an outcome of the inner and inherent contradictions which develop inevitably in every situation. This is a complete explanation of all causal processes. It is not mind that dominates matter, but it is itself the product of matter. The effective causes are the objective events in the universe. Materialistic realism must be substituted for Hegelian idealism.

(2) Although dialectical materialism is believed to be a comprehensive hypothesis adequate for a universal explanation of all phenomena of all categories, the chief interest of Marxism is its application to the field of social institutions and processes.

(3) In the social sphere, the economic phenomena, comprised under the general concept of the mode of production, are the really creative and potent factors.

Religion, ethics, politics and art are all derivatives of the mode of production.

(4) History is not a chaos of haphazard events; there is a method in this apparent madness. The objective conditions for the production of the material means of life form the basis of all the historical activity of man. History was never understood by any philosopher or historian because none of them chanced to possess this master-key. All idealistic and providential explanations of history are misleading. Ideas and religions are nothing but the material world reflected by the human mind. There is no other creator or director of the world forces except the dialectics of matter. Politics and judicial systems are not products of abstract ideas of justice but are rooted in the material conditions of life. The anatomy of civil society is a byproduct of its economics. The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. Social changes, political revolutions and religious reformation are not due to any increasing insight into eternal truth and justice; they must be sought in the economics of the epoch concerned. In a joint work on German ideology, Marx and Engels sum it up as follows:

`In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here the ascent is made from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not start from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as described, thought of, imagined and conceived, in order thence and thereby to reach corporeal men; we start from real active men and from their life-process also show the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.

The operation of non-economic forces is not denied but, as Engels says, according to the materialistic conception of history, the production and reproduction of

real life constitutes in the last instance the determining factor of history.

The entire value of a commodity consists of physical or mental labour embodied in its production. A commodity has a value because it is a crystallisation of social labour. The relative values of commodities are determined by the respective quantities or amounts of labour worked up, realised, fixed in them. But it is only socially valuable labour that is value-determining.

Marx conceived of all kinds and degrees of occupational skill as being reducible to standard time-units of unskilled labour. The value of quality can be judged only by reducing it to quantity of unskilled labour. Wages are, on the whole, bound closely to a physical subsistence level.

Marx maintained that under capitalism the working day must be longer than the number of hours of average labour required to produce the workers' subsistence. The value produced during these excess hours constitutes surplus value, i.e. values produced by the workers but which they do not get. The labourer is made to work more hours than is necessary for his own subsistence and the surplus value thus created is annexed by the employer.

The creation and grabbing of surplus value is inevitable under the capitalistic system. To Marx, it is the heart and soul of that system. While during earlier historical stages of capitalism, the capitalist exercised personal initiative in the organisation of production, he continued, even at the mature stages of capitalism, to hire others to do the directing, while he retained the passive role of the immediate supplier of funds to pay labour. A capitalist has no other aim but the acquisition of surplus value. All surplus value, whether profit, interest or rent, is in substance the materialisation of unpaid labour.

After the process of capital accumulation is set going, it is the labourer's own labour robbed from him, which is advanced to the labourer to create further surplus value for the capitalist employer. The produce of the labour of those who do work gets unavoidably accumulated in the hands of those who do not work, and becomes in their hands the most powerful means to enslave the very men who produced it. This process is inherent in the entire capitalistic system.

Being contrary to human welfare and internally inconsistent, it must be scrapped and superseded. Economic forces have always created mutually antagonistic classes of the oppressors and the oppressed.

The modern bourgeois society, that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society, has not done away with class-antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggles in place of the old ones'. Society has now split up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat.

'A sense of this irreconcilable clash of interests must be instilled into the workers. With their class-consciousness developed, class-struggle would ensue; and this, necessarily taking a political form, would be the first step in preparation for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a new order'.

Under capitalism the bourgeoisie would go on accumulating surplus profit out of the unpaid labour of the workers and the workers would go on getting wages which would be exhausted in their own reproduction.

Marx makes no distinction between the incomes of the moneylender, the landowner, the capitalist, the employer and, the merchant. He thinks there are no essential

differences in their interests or their positions within the bourgeoisie. Their incomes consist of portions of surplus value produced by labour.

The lower strata of the bourgeoisie, the small trades people, shopkeepers, handicraftsmen and the peasants, would gradually sink into the proletariat because they will be swamped in competition with big capitalists.

Bourgeoisie has played a very important, progressive and transitional role. It has played a revolutionary part in tearing asunder all feudal ties and retaining naked self-interest as the only nexus between man and man. It has drowned in the icy water of egotistical calculation all religious fervour and idealistic sentimentalism. Only direct brutal exploitation is left. Its positive achievement is the advancement of humanity in many directions without any deliberate humanitarian motive. Nature's forces have been subjected to applied science and various parts of the world have been brought into close contact.

But, in accordance with the inevitable dialectic of materialism, it has set in operation forces that will cause its ultimate downfall. It has created the proletariat as its logical correlative. The proletariat is defined as a class of labourers who live only so long as they find work, and they find work so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who sell themselves piecemeal are a commodity like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition and to all the fluctuations of the market.[1]

As industrial processes herd together large masses of workers in one town, the proletariat is in a much better position to form combinations against the bourgeois and can club together in order to keep up the rate of wages. The

proletariat is also benefited by increased means of communication.

The state is an agency of oppression controlled by the bourgeoisie to advance its own interests. A well-organised society that has eradicated the distinction of classes can exist in the absence of the state. All political power is only the organised power of one class for oppressing another and as Communism advances the state shall wither.

In the capitalistic system, concentration and centralisation of capital perpetuate and strengthen themselves. In the internecine conflicts of capitalists, smaller capitalists will be devoured by bigger ones. Free competition among capitalists will be gradually replaced by gigantic monopolies. 'Finance capital' reaching out beyond the boundaries of a single capitalistic country becomes 'capitalistic imperialism'.

International monopoly combines of capitalists are formed which divide up the world.

The imperialist powers, fighting among themselves for the right to share in this monopoly, struggle for markets and for profitable investment of 'finance capital.' The world will become 'one bloody lump' of the belligerent group of capitalists, the slave-drivers of a capitalist slavery. The contradictions created by capitalist production will play upon the world instead of a nation.

The proletariat must prepare itself to seize power at the collapse of the capitalist system which is inevitable because of its internal contradictions. The proletariat shall have to seize power, establish its own state to crush out all capitalist employers and their class-ideology.

In the first stage, the proletarian state shall be an engine of oppression against the capitalists but the

proletarian state shall be gradually liquidated when the era of full Communism is ushered in, when each person would be motivated to work with his full capacity and to consume from the common product merely in accord with his needs.

The change cannot take place by peaceful evolution. Economic fight must turn into a political fight. The bourgeois state shall not give in without a bitter fight. According to Marx and Engels, force is not an absolute evil; it is the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new. Immense moral and spiritual impetus results from every victorious revolution.

The change from Capitalism to Communism is dialectically inevitable but a violent revolution is an essential phase of that dialectic. In the transtitional state, political power will change places; the bourgeoisie will lose it, the proletariat shall acquire it and the ruled will become the rulers.

In the earlier phases, there shall be no universal democracy as formerly democracy existed for the bourgeoisie only; now it will exist for the workers only; exploiters and oppressors of the people shall be excluded from this democracy in the transition from Capitalism to Communism.

As means of production will belong to the whole of society, all citizens shall be transformed into hired employees of the state.

Labourers will work for wages, each worker receiving for an equal quantity of labour an equal quantity of products and `he who does not work shall not eat.' There shall be difference in wages but no exploitation.

According to Marx, the goal of Communism is `from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs.'

But the advent of full Communism is not inevitable. Lenin says, 'It has never entered the head of any socialist to promise that the highest phase of Communism will arrive' (Lenin, quoting Marx in *The State and Revolution)*.

He further pointed out that full Communism cannot be introduced; by what stages, and by means of what practical measures, humanity will proceed to this higher aim,this we do not and cannot know. 'It can only be said with the fullest confidence that expropriation of the capitalists will inevitably result in a gigantic development of the productive forces of human society'.

It is the aim of Communism to establish a classless society.

FASCISM

Under this term will be included the economic systems of both Italy and Germany before World War II. In Germany it was called National Socialism. The word *Fascism* is derived from *fascis* meaning a bundle of rods which was a symbol of authority with the Romans. This movement in both countries was directed against democractic liberalism which hoped that cooperation by agreement would replace national conflicts. President Wilson was a great interpreter of the liberal spirit. Liberalism preached self-determination of peoples as a desirable goal; small nations were to be safe from the aggression of larger nations. Minorities were to be protected from the oppression of majorities. Everywhere women, along with men, were to be granted suffrage in constitutional democracies. Similarly, labour was to be protected against the exploitation of employers. A league of nations was to be set up to settle international disputes and to rule out war and the arbitrament of the sword.

Socialists and Communists agreed with many of these objectives but were of opinion that political democracy alone cannot achieve them unless it is coupled with industrial democracy. Violence may be necessary to achieve the workers' utopia of economic equality and soical justice. As only the workers' states can achieve real and abiding international harmony, the primary aim should be the establishment of the workers' states.

Fascism, under the leadership of Mussolini, controlled the government of Italy in 1922, and repudiated most of these objectives along with the methods proposed to attain them. Fascism came to the conclusion that liberal democracy had its day and it has now to be transcended not by Socialism or Communism but by something quite different. It started revaluation of all the values of liberal democracy. Government by majorities attained through the ballot was despised and the notion of opposition parties in the parliament or within the government ridiculed as a puerile absurdity. Similarly, freedom of thought and speech was anthema. Their reading of history convinced them that great and powerful states were created and ruled by a bundle of a few individuals and by militant minorities who did not legislate by consulting the masses. Democratic liberalism grants the right of private ownership as the first essential of freedom, and rectifies disequilibrium of power by an honoured system of checks and balances. Fascism also grants the right of private ownership but within the framework of a power-seeking state. Similarly, checks and balances are contrived and controlled by the state. Individual liberty is not an absolute right; the real entity is the state and the individual has no existence, except as an organ of the state. Fascism is against vesting the ownership of land and capital in society as a whole. State-control must not extend to the abolition of private property because that would weaken the state, but any amount of encroachment

by the state is permissible, if dictated by the necessities of the state. Fascism denies the control of the means of production to the workers.

Let us try to sum up the basic concepts of Fascism.

Government by universal suffrage is wrong. The majority of citizens cannot be trusted to determine public policy. They should be taught their duties and not allowed to clamour for their rights. The natural fact is the inequality of men and not their fictitious equality. Mussolini urges: 'The beneficial and fruitful inequality of mankind can never be permanently levelled through the mere operation of a mechanical process, such as universal suffrage.' According to an exponent of Fascism, it trains its guns on the whole block of democratic ideologies. In democractic regimes, people are, from time to time, deluded into the belief that they exercise sovereignty, while all the time real sovereignty is exercised by and resides in others who may be self-seeking and tyrannical. Mussolini thus expresses his creed: 'Fascism denies that numbers, as such, can be the determining factor in human society; it denies the right of numbers to govern by means of periodical consultations.'

Hitler is of the same opinion. Here is a quotation from *My Struggle:* 'The national state must work untiringly to set all government, especially the highest—that is, the political leadership free from the principle of control by majorities, that is, the multitude—so as to secure the undisputed authority of the individual (i.e. the strong leader) in its stead. There must be no majoirty making decisions, but merely a body of responsible persons, and the word "council" will revert to its ancient meaning. Every man shall have councillors at his side, but the decision shall be made by one man.'

The alternative to democracy is the rule of the self-constituted few.

Fascism agrees with Socialism and Communism in the view that competitive economic systems based on *laissez-faire* have developed inner contradictions and disrupting anti-social tendencies.

Fascism stands for state-controlled capitalistic system. Uncontrolled capitalism cannot achieve stability, provide employment or utilise the capital resources completely. If various economic groups are unified by the state, private ownership could be divested of its evils and made to work as a beneficial system. All economic life must be nationally directed within the framework of private ownerships.

Fascism does not, generally speaking, believe in the possibility or utility of perpetual peace. Mussolini utters his philosophy of war and peace in the following rhetorical sentences: `Fascism discards pacifism as a cloak for cowardly supine renunciation in contradistinction to self-sacrifice. War alone keeps up all human energies to their maximum tension and sets the seal of nobility on those people who have the courage to face it. All other tests are substitutes which never place a man face to face with himself before the alternative of life or death. Therefore all doctrines which postulate peace at all costs are incompatible with Fascism. Equally foreign to the spirit of Fascism—even if accepted as useful in meeting special political situations—are all internationalistic or league superstructures which, as history shows crumble to the ground, whenever the heart of nations is deeply stirred by sentimental, idealistic or practical considerations. Fascism carries this anti-pacifistic attitude into the life of the individual. "I do not care a damn" (*me ne frego)*, the proud motto of the fighting squads scrawled by a wounded man on

his bandages, is not only an act of philosophic stoicism, it sums up a doctrine which is not merely political: it is evidence of fighting spirit which accepts all risks.'

'Such a conception of life makes Fascism the resolute negation of the doctrine underlying the so-called scientific and Marxian socialism, the doctrine of historic materialism which would explain the history of mankind in terms of the class-struggle and by changes in the processes and instruments of production, to the exclusion of all else.'

Fascism recognises the importance of economic factors but it denies that class-struggle is the preponderating agent in social transformations.

Fascism denies the hedonistic utilitarian doctrine that the *summum bonum* is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, meaning by 'happiness' only the sum of pleasures.

Communism prophesies that the state, being always an engine of oppression, must finally wither away for Fascist state is more real than the individual and is greater than the sum of the individuals. Strengthening of the state must be the ultimate aim, to which all individual liberty and individual happiness must be sacrificed if it becomes necessary.

Fascism considers nationalism to be an indisputable datum; in comparison with this, internationalism is an ineffective makeshift.

Fascist state is a totalitarian state; the sovereignty of the state is total and indivisible and cannot be distributed among the citizens, as is the case in democracies. Mussolini's famous dictum expresses it forcefully in a few words: 'Everything in the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state. It is omnipotent, omnipresent and omnicompetent.'

'The Fascist state lays claim to rule in the economic field no less than in others; it makes its action felt 'throughout the length and breadth of the country by means of its cooperative, social and educational institutions and all the political, economic and spiritual forces of the nation, organised in their respective associations, circulate within the state.'

The state being an abstract entity, in actual practice, the persons who control the state become the symbol and embodiment of this omnipotence. At the head is the leader who can assert with greater truth than Louis the XIV of France *l'etat, c'est moi,* 'I am the state,' and lay claim to blind loyalty and unconditional obedience.

National pride must be fostered by history and, if necessary, by myth. The virtues of the nation must be extolled at the expense of other nations. The myth of the 'chosen people' must become a psychological reality. Propaganda must be vigorously directed against the decadence of democratic nations.

The Nazis emphasised, more particularly, the doctrine of racial superiority and racial purity.

Force is the creator of nations, states and empires and it shall continue to be so in the present and the future. The strong shall rule over the weak and there is no shame or injustice attached to it.

Communism strives for a universal, international unity of working humanity transcending the barriers of nationality and the differences of race and colour. Fascism stands for the accentuation of national differences, dividing the world into natural masters and natural slaves. Inter-state morality must be different from morality among individuals of the same states. There are superior and inferior races and nations; any attempt at the fusion of races or the

cooperation of strong and weak nations on terms of equality is a retrograde step in the course of biological evolution whose basic law is natural selection and survival of the fittest.

In a totalitarian Fascist state, the state precedes the individual, while in liberal democracies the individual precedes the state and has his rights guaranteed by constitutional statutes.

The German idealist, Fichte, said that history is a gradual evolution of liberities. Mussolini and the great Fascist philosopher, Giovanni Gentile, repudiate this interpretation of human history and maintain the thesis that 'the maximum of liberty coincides with the maximum of state force.' 'All history of man's civilisation, from the caves to the civilised or so-called civilised man, is a progressive limitation of liberty.'

Since the state is of one mind and one policy, a single party is necessary to make decisions and to enforce them. Decisions are made ultimately by an inner circle of leaders and then directives are issued to the executives.

Leadership is pyramidal; at the apex is the great leader whose judgment must be taken as infallible and whose will is absolute.

Fascism believes in regulated and controlled capitalist economy. Individual and corporate enterprises are retained; government is not the only enterpriser or employer but is a controller of the direction which production is to take. Article Eight of the Italian Labour Charter of 1926 states: 'The corporate state considers that private enterprise in the sphere of production is the most effective and useful instrument in the interest of the nation.' The employer and the employed must be made to work harmoniously in the interest of the nation.

Without creating a socialist state, certain socialistic measures are necessary. The Nazis proposed the abolition of unearned incomes, the confiscation of war profits, nationalisation of trusts, profit-sharing in large concerns, the extensive development of old-age pensions and the improvement of public health through the protection of mother and child.

Fascism does not intend to abolish groups and classes. The national economy has to devise an economic framework in which national solidarity will replace the opposing interests of the groups. The vast groupings of employers and employees into syndicates should constitute the practical machinery for welding the classes into an organic whole.

It is not the production and equitable distribution of the economic goods that can awaken and stimulate the potentialities of man. The strength and glory of the nation ought to become ruling passions in the minds of the citizens. In place of individual liberty, unswerving loyalty to the nation must be inculcated. If national glory is attained by even lowering the standard of living, a nation should accept it with good cheer. As Mussolini stated in 1934: 'We are probably moving towards a period of humanity, resting on a lower standard of living. Humanity is capable of asceticism such as we perhaps have no conception of.'

Fascism has definite, logically formulated philosophy, but its trends and tracks may be traced in its general outlook as well as in its methods. These trends may best be defined negatively.

It is against all democratic, liberal and equalitarian philosophies.

The philosophical basis of French and American Revolutions is repudiated, which starts with the natural rights of man.

It is definitely against the philosophical presumptions of *laissez-faire*.

Humanitarian doctrines of the New Testament Christianity also do not suit it.

Fascism considers all doctrines of class-war and working class control as false. It is against rationalism. Search of truth for its own sake or observation, experiment, deductive and inductive reasoning have a subordinate place in human existence. Any scientific or philosophical truth must be evaluated by its effects on the spirit and life of the nation.

In the interest of national glory the citizens must be drilled and conditioned to accept certain views and reject others.

Rationalism repudiates mere authority without proof; Fascism demands blind acceptance and obedience. Many Fascists exultingly talk of revolt against reason and take pride in irrationalism. They emphasise will rather than thought, and feeling rather than intellect. Propaganda takes the place of objective reasoning, force is preferred to argument with the tacit belief that it is might which ultimately assumes the complexion of right.

Peace has a degenerating influence and continued peace leads to the decadence of nations. War and struggle, therefore, must be glorified in the form of racial or national conflict.

For the background of the Fascist philosophy one has to go back to Fichte, Nietzsche and Treitschke among the Germans.

Fichte preached the divine mission of the German nation.

Nietzsche despised love and gentleness; for him, life moved upward by the urge to more and more power. Men are eternally classified into masters and slaves. There is no universal humanistic ethics; there is only master morality and slave morality.

All these influences must have worked on the Germans as well as the Italians.

In comparison with Mussolini, who was a scholar, Hitler was an ignorant fanatic. Some biographers of Mussolini have mentioned a number of thinkers whose philosophies Mussolini imbibed and incorporated in his outlook. He was an admirer of the pragmatism of William James whose theory of truth is that truth is that which works, which Mussolini interpreted as 'that which works is right.;' Bergson is another irrationalist whose creative evolution taught that the *elan vital,* the vital urge of life, creates existence, truth and values as it proceeds. There is no truth that mirrors any eternal pattern of reality.

Fascism appears to be closer to Machiavelli than to any other political thinker. Mussolini being an Italian appears to have been deeply impressed by him. One of Mussolini's biographers relates the story of Mussolini's father reading Machiavelli to the boy. After he became Dictator, Mussolini began a thesis on Machiavelli, of which only the introduction was completed and published. Machiavelli taught that all was fair for the power and glory of the state and in inter-state relations the tenets of abstract justice and morality must be disregarded. Men are naturally egotistic, power-loving and vicious. Justice is not natural to the individual, who could be made to bow to law and force by necessity. Liberty would create only confusion and

disorder. A statesman can succeed only if he starts on the presumption of the natural baseness and ruthless of self-seeking of men. It is not idealism but force which rules all human relations.

To sum up, Fascist philosophy revolves round the conception of the nationalistic, totalitarian state, organised as an organic cultural unit, strong, self-sufficient and aggressive. It wants to strengthen the collective, national ego.

ISLAMIC POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY

Having given brief sketches of Capitalistic, Communistic and Fascist ideologies, we are now in a position to compare and contrast them with the basic Islamic concepts. None of these ideologies can be accepted or rejected as a whole; they emphasise partial truths and fragmentary realities mixed with a good deal of false and untenable attitudes towards life. Industrial capitalism, which was accompanied with liberal democratic movements, was based on the *laissez-faire* economics of Adam Smith. This system created rapidly great wealth and made the nations practising it strong and prosperous. But this prosperity was achieved at a great cost. The masses got the right of voice but were gradually made so helpless that their political liberty was of no avail. Instruments of production became more and more costly and could be possessed by only very large capitalists either singly or in corporation. As wealth was concentrated at the one end, poverty grew at the other end. Society began to split up into classes of *haves* and *have-nots*. Formerly, when the instruments of production were less costly, the peasant, the worker, the craftsman became easily the owners of these instruments. Now the independent craftsman lost his independence and became a cog in a colossal capitalistic machine. Liberal democracy

had secured for him the right of vote and the freedom of contract but he was too weak to bargain. Gradually, after a sustained struggle, the workers came together in trade unions and were pitched as a class against the employers. As the empolyer had a right to close the factory, the workers had a right to strike to improve their wages. Capitalism developed its own inner contradictions which we have already mentioned, and mere political democracy failed to create social justice. Capitalism also created colonialism and war for markets. When the social fabric of humanity began to sag everywhere, different nations produced different remedies and panaceas to cure the ills of a confounded civilisation.

It is well known that Islam is not only a metaphysical belief but it offers a system and scheme of life which has logical unity. We will try to give a brief sketch of its ideology. We will see that it agrees with some parts of every great scheme and rejects some other parts. Every system thus far sketched has some vital defect that vitiates it either in its very foundations or in the consequences that inevitably follow from it.

Laissez-faire capitalism preached liberty and equality in the abstract but the state remaining neutral in the struggle for existence could take no steps to see that ünjust inequalities are not accentuated. In delivering society from feudal and monarchical tyranny, it created a kind of free wage-slavery; the right of free contract and free vote remained abortive; political democracy was combined with economic slavery. Capitalistic society in countries like England and America has progressively tried to remedy the evils that ensue from uncontrolled capitalism but the strains and stresses generated by the nature of the system continue to create social unrest.

Islam is based on liberty, fraternity and equality and its philosophical outlook is theistic. All philosophies of life and fundamental attitudes towards existence have great practical consequences. We have seen that the philosophy of orthodox Communism is materialistic and atheistic. Over against that, Islam believes that life has a spiritual origin, a spiritual background and a spiritual goal and purpose. The universe is not governed by blind mechanistic forces and is not subject to a merely materialistic dialectic. Life has a physical basis too and Islam does not ignore it. It is cognizant of the fact that the physical well - being of man must be assured, in order to make him spiritually free.

Created by a good, omniscient and omnipotent being, the universe is not ethically neutral but is positively good, whose processes generate certain abiding values.

There is no antithesis between the spirit and the flesh or betwen this world and the next. As God is one, so entire existence is linked together. The Muslim is asked to pray for well-being in this world prior to well-being in the next. Moral causation creates effects here and now as it will continue to do in the hereafter. Communism repudiates the providental explanation of creation, and its explanation of all human history, as of all physical phenomena, is based on crass materialism; only modes of production produce moral, religious or cultural values. The Qur'anic explanation of history is quite the opposite of it. It asserts that the rise and fall of nations is due primarily to the changes in the beliefs and characters of the nations. Islam believes that when 'vision fails the nations perish.' According to the Qur'an, no real revolution occurs in the life of a people until a revolution occurs in their mental and moral outlook. 'Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition' (xiii. 11). The Qur'an gives illustrations of materially prosperous nations that perished because of

their narrow materialistic outlook. Not believing in the eternal verities of the moral law, they became selfish and tyrannical; they were given great latitudes to reform themselves, but when they did not heed the signs of the Lord, the day of reckoning came and they were doomed. God has set up a balance of right and wrong; the balance is so sensitive and unerring that every atom is weighed in it, and the result becomes visible in due course. The Islamic theory of history follows from its theistic outlook and the Communist theory of history follows from its materialism. The two outlooks are so diametrically opposed that it is impossible for a theistic Muslim to become a Marxian Communist.

The Fascists replaced the worship of mere production and equitable distribution by the worship of the state. The worship of the state is nothing but magnified tribalism of the barbarous period of civilisation: 'My country, right or wrong'. Fascism wants to build up a powerful state and inculcates the worship of the state as a super-individual entity; it is virtually the worship of the tribal god or idol. Islam too saw the necessity of building up a powerful state which should safeguard the fundamental liberties of the people and which should protect itself against aggressors from outside and also protect the weak from the tyranny of the strong. Islam is a social and political religion and all of its institutions have a reference to social justice and social solidarity. No unconditional obedience, however, is due to the state or its leaders and governors. Obedience to superiors is inculcated in the interest of law and discipline, but this obedience is always conditional on the orders being moral. 'There is no obedience in sin,' is a fundamental tenet of Islam. The orders and actions of even the supreme head of the state can be publicly questioned by even the humblest citizens.

In Islam there is complete equality before law. The Prophet himself asked others to exercise their right of retaliation or compensation even against himself if he had inadvertently done them any wrong. The mighty Khalifa `Umar and the wise and pious `Ali appeared in the courts as claimants or defendants to demand even-handed justice.

Islam inculcates government by consultation. The Prophet almost daily held consultations with his companions on matters of the state. The Qur'an mentions as one of the good qualities of a Muslim that he is no autocratic or dictatorial but settles all matters of soical importance by consultation.

As the Muslim nation has received in the Qur'an the designation `the Nation of the Middle Path,' the nation follows the golden mean in all extremes. This is analogous to the Greek view of life whose motto was `nothing in excess.' The doctrine of the golden mean forms the pivotal point also in Aristotelian ethics. This characteristic of Islam runs through all its teaching and practice; the entire ethics of Islam is a practical ethics which made Renan remark that Islam is a religion for men. It is not meant for angels. In every injunction, actual human nature with all its instincts and urges is taken into consideration. Instincts and emotions are the instruments of life; they are meant to be regulated and not suppressed. One of the companions of the Prophet expressed his regret in the following words: `When I am sitting in your presence, my moral tone is exalted and high ideas and ideals pervade my consciousness; but when I am away, my moral level is suddenly lowered; how sorry I feel for myself!' Hearing this the Prophet replied, `You must not feel depressed and dejected; you are a human being and not an angel. If God had desired to populate the world with beings without any moral conflict, He would have made the angels inhabit it; but He did not choose to do so; your moral

compunction and this feeling of rise and fall is a sign of faith.' Hearing this the man was reassured.

We have described some of the major programmes of human uplift delineated by recent thinkers, reformers and leaders of nations. In every one of those programmes there are certain elements that form parts of the Islamic ideology, but in all of them partial truths are exaggerated to the extent of becoming falsehoods, and the fanatical emphasis on certain parts with suppression of others has made them fail while dealing with life as a whole. There is much in liberal democracy that is a part and parcel of Islam. Equality before law and equality of opportunity are inculcated by Islam. But racial and national prejudices still vitiate the professions and practices of liberal democracy; from the point of view of Islam, it is not liberal enough nor can Islam subscribe to its capitalistic structure in which interest forms the backbone. Freedom of conscience and freedom of expression, along with freedom of all knowledge, were inculcated and practised by Islam before the world dreamt of it. 'There ought to be no compulsion in religion' (ii. 256) is one of the basic principles of the Qur'an. Western democracy accepts the Islamic injunction of the equality of citizens in their civic rights, but considers it necessary to divide the citizens in majorities and minorities and deems it necessary to have opposition parties whose chief aim is to oppose government measures in almost everything; it is opposition for the sake of opposition, with the set purpose of discrediting and ultimately dislodging the party in power. The Communists and Fascists both repudiated this method of the cock-fight of caucuses and set up only one ruling party that should brook no opposition either from individuals or from groups. The whole spirit of Islam is against both these alternatives. Ruling by one party takes away the liberty of the citizens to voice their independent feelings; in such totalitarian states there can be no liberty for the individual; he must either fall

in line with the dictates of the party or forfeit his essential liberties. Similary, in the struggle for power in the party politics of liberal democracies, truth and common weal are ruled out or take a very subordinate place. There is a regimentaton of the representatives of the people in every parliament. An independent man becomes a backbencher; an independent man in this system, if he gets elected at all, is considered to be useless because no party can depend upon him. In a truly Islamic consultative body as was convened off and on by the great Caliph `Umar, men of understanding and character came together, without forming a single dictatorial party or splitting up into majority and minority groups. If an Islamic state convenes assemblies or consultative groups for the settlement of specific or general problems, every member must be an independent member representing particular regions or particular interests, not elected on any party ticket. He must be chosen only on the basis of his knowledge and character.

The Islamic state would endorse some part of the programme of the state without subscribing to its entire ideology. Fascism proposes to weld the nation into an organic whole in which the conflicts of interests shall not be allowed a freeplay to the detriment of national solidarity. The right of private property is recognised as it is recognised in Islam, but all rights of the employers and the employed are subject to the overall supervision and control of the state. In the Fascist programme there is much to be admired. But the fundamental urge of the Fascist state is vicious. The state is set up on a racial or national basis. The state becomes an object of worship which has a life of its own, over and above the lives of the individuals. This metaphysical and mythical entity has moral purposes as the ethics of the individual does not apply to it. The purpose of the state is to maintain its strength and glory and to inculcate in the citizens a blind and mystical obedience.

Internationalism is eschewed. Universal humanity is considered a myth and all attempts in that direction are dubbed as hypocritical. According to Fascism, among the national groups there is a biological struggle for existence which recognises no other law but that of survival through superior might; hence preparation for war is the primary duty of every state; pacifism is the creed of the degenerates. Having resolved conflicts within the nation, by dictating modes of forced harmony, it encourages conflicts between different states. As one-party dictatorship based on force is un-Islamic, so is the basic ideology of a Fascist state. Islam recognises no racial or national boundaries as vital and ultimate and encourages all attempts at international peace. Great emphasis is laid on peaceful cooperation between different religious or national groups on the basis of all elements that are common between them. The Qur'an invited the Jews and the Christians to cooperate with the Muslims on that which formed common ground between them. Fascism derided the basis of the League of Nations. That international body and its successor, the United Nations, promulgated very high ideals but fell miserably short in implementing them. It was *power* rather than *peace* that dominated their mind and with that mental make-up there could be little hope of any substantial achievement in the sphere of international justice. In the first place it was difficult for them to agree even on an obviously just course and even if they happened to agree, they had neither the will nor the power to implernent their dicision, if it involved a real sacrifice on their part. The Fascist objection to the League was, however, not based on its inefficiency, but the very idea of international justice was repudiated. The Fascist idea is that it is the right of the strong to conquer and hold what it can; it is the destiny of the weak to be conquered, ruled and exploited. However one might appreciate the Fascist methods of harmonising conflicts within the body

politic and of achieving national solidarity, the moral cost is too great to be imitated by a truly Islamic state, whose aim is the establishment of universal peace transcending all racial and national boundaries.

The Qur'an has enunciated a basis for a truly effective League of Nations by teaching that if two groups disagree about a vital right, attempt should be made by distinterested parties to settle the dispute in a just manner. The award having been given, the parties to the dispute should be bound to abide by it. If a party is recalcitrant and refuses to act according to the decision, it should be made to bend by force used by all the parties together. It is clear that no League of Nations can ever become an effective body until it acts on this Qur'anic injunction.

THE WELFARE STATE

The modern states have gradually evolved the idea of a welfare state but it will be difficult for a political historian to deny the fact that Muhammad was the first statesman to conceive the idea of a welfare state and to put it into practice. Even when England had developed its political institutions and established parliamentary government on a workable basis, its great philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was advocating the idea of a *laissez-faire* state acting as a policeman only. Such a police state gathers taxes from its citizens to maintain, on behalf of the taxpayers, army and police to protect the citizens against invaders and law-breakers. Citizens have to be protected against murder and personal injury, theft and fraud. At the most, the state might spend some money on education and public health. Spencer wanted no interference of the state in the economic life of the society, which should be based only on free contract. The law of supply and demand will by itself create an equilibrium. Adam Smith, the father of *laissez-faire* economics, restricted the functions of the

governmnet to three things only. He says, `According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to—three duties of great importance indeed but plain and intelligible to common understanding: first, the duty of protecting society from violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and, thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain, because the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society' (*The Wealth of Nations,* Book IV, Chapter IX). These restricted functions of the state gave a free hand to exploiting employers and capitalists and the maldistribution of wealth divided society into two warring camps. The gulf between the *haves* and the *have-nots* widened without the state stirring to think out any remedies. Against the strikes of labour the state exercised its police functions. Gradually the statesmen and humanitarian thinkers began to urge for the extension of the functions of the state. The first remedy was a revised system of taxation for a partial levelling of social inequalities, The capitalistic states began to broaden the sphere of their activities. Housing, unemployment insurance, health insurance, old-age pensions and many other humane measures were gradually proposed and to some extent adopted by some countries, until we come to the great Beveridge Scheme which has chalked out a comprehensive programme for a welfare state. These trends are a clear proof of how the world, by a long process of trial and error, is gradually coming round to see the rationality and

righteousness of Muhammad's concept of the state. We have already stated the view of Islam about interest. Muhammad was insistent that interest must be wiped out of all economic transactions. Now the great economists of the West are coming round to this very view rather hesitatingly that banking must be nationalised and interest must be controlled, and Keynes exhorted the states to revive moral and religious sanctions in this respect. But, even now, these economists think that the absolute abolition of interest is not a practical proposition; it has only to be controlled and put at a very low level to serve the purposes of production. Islam allowed the owner of capital to become a partner with the productive worker, so that capital is indissolubly linked to production and the vicissitudes of trade are shared by both. When interest is divorced from productivity, all the risk is taken by the borrower, while the lender is assured by the state that he could legitimately demand his pound of flesh. In the Islamic system there is a capital levy of *Zakat* on capital that is lying idle. Islam wants production and trade to prosper and that explains all its strong injunctions against hoarding. A part of the hoarded wealth is taken away by the state to be spent on social welfare, particularly to help the poorer classes. A welfare state has to encourage the production of wealth by human labour and exploitation of natural resources; but it has also to be vigilant that wealth circulates in the whole social organism and does not cause plethora and congestion in one part and anaemia in the other. The Qur'an warns: `See that wealth does not circulate amongst the rich only; `Unearned wealth accumulates mostly by interest and by the hoarding of surpluses. It also accumlates by inequitable laws of inheritance or by permission to will away the whole property to a single recipient. Granting the right of ownership and private property, Islam created all necessary safeguards against undue concentration of wealth on the one hand and poverty

on the other. All great religions have always laid great emphasis on charity and denounced the ungenerous and callous rich, but it was Islam which grappled successfully and in a practical manner with the problem of the equitable distribution of wealth. Knowing human nature, it realised that mere abstract moral exhortation would not do, unless the economic structure of society was remoulded by necessary legislation. Religious belief and its verbal profession is not enough. Good people are described in the Qur'an as those who believe and do good deeds and among the good deeds charity is emphasised as the most essential virtue. Then charity is classified as voluntary charity and compulsory charity. About voluntary charity it is said that good men do not keep more than they need; they never hoard but part with their surplus. *Zakat*, the state-organised tax for the relief of distress of all kinds, is one of the main pillars of Islam and is often mentioned in the Qur'an along with prayers with the warning that the prayers of those who do not give *Zakat*, or charity are ineffective and unacceptable to God. Looking at the economic life around him, the Prophet defined, in a number of cases, as to what should be considered as constituting surplus capital and to what extent it should be taxed. If the economic structure of society undergoes fundamental changes, the detalis of the scheme may be readjusted to suit the circumstances, always keeping in view the spirit and purpose of the scheme. According to Islam, hoarded surpluses create moral and social poison by demoralising the poor, the destitute and the helpless, thereby the whole social organism becomes diseased. *Zakat* means purity as well as growth and blessing. A society that would observe it would become pure and prosperous because genuine prosperity is nothing but social health. Growth and efficiency of the economic life depend on it. It is a pivot of the Muslim public finance. The Prophet was afraid of superfluous wealth as well as of poverty. He

described the abolition of poverty as one of the chief aims of Islam. Many another religion has exalted poverty to the pitch of spirituality; this attitude was the result of a confusion between poverty and simple life. Simple life was praised by the Prophet and was practised by him, but about poverty he prayed to God to keep it away from human beings, because, as he said, `it darkens a man's face in both the worlds, and makes him almost lose his faith'. He was equally, rather more, afraid of superfluous wealth. He is reported to have said, 'O ye Muslims, I am more afraid of wealth among you than poverty.' After him, when rich war booty arrived from Persia and was piled before Caliph `Umar, his eyes were dimmed with tears. Someone remarked, 'O Chief of the Muslims, it is an occasion to rejoice and not to shed tears'. To this he replied, 'I am afraid, it is danger for Islam,' This remark should open the eyes of those ignorant and hostile critics of Islam who say that love of booty constituted the main urge of the early Muslim warriors.

The institution of *Zakat,* as the pivotal point of the Islamic welfare state, demands that we should devote a little more space to the clarification of it. The Propeht said, 'Your Islam can find perfection only in the giving of *Zakat.* Pay *Zakat* out of your property; this will purify you and will enable you to do your duty by those related to you. Be careful of the rights of the beggar, the neighbour, and the indigent, and do not indulge in extravagance'; `A nation that withheld *Zakat* courted dearth and indigence;' Without *Zakat* neither faith nor prayer is acceptable to Allah.'

No state has the right to be called an Islamic state if it disregards the injunctions about *Zakat,* because, according to Islam, a state has no other purpose except social welfare and soical welfare is impossible without *Zakat.* If the right of private initiative and private ownership is granted as an

essential factor in individual liberty, and if the system is left to itself without corrective taxation, some men are bound to acquire and hoard more than they need and others will be left destitutes; therefore, the mode of earning and distribution of wealth must be controlled by the state. After the political success of Islam, some Arabian tribes had hastened to enter the fold of the Islamic state without having thoroughly understood and imbibed the spirit of Islam. About such people it is said in the Qur'an that when they profess that they have acquired faith, they should be told that they have only submitted to the power of Islam; faith is a matter of deeper realisation. After the death of the holy Prophet, a number of such tribes refused to pay *Zakat* and started a no-tax campaign. The successors of the Prophet were in a quandary. What to do with such people who say they are Muslims believing in the unity of God and offering prayers? How could a Caliph wage war against the believers? This was initially the view of even such a strong-willed man as `Umar. But Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet, had a clearer vision of Islam in this respect. His opinion was that faith was incomplete without *Zakat*. Offering prayers but taking no part in and making no sacrifices for public welfare is a virtual negation of faith. He said he would wage war on those who refused to pay this tax. `Umar too praised him for his superior vision and his firm decision, and a bloody war was actually waged for this purpose. It is a pity that, some time later, the compulsory tax which formed the backbone of the welfare state, and which had to be collected by the state and distributed by the state, was made voluntary and left to the conscience of the giver. The western *laissez-faire* economics had trusted the enlightened self-interest of individuals to create an economic equilibrium, and the world now knows the chaos created by this misreadng of the human instincts. Self-interest did not prove to be so enlightened that private and social interests

would coincide by any providential arrangement. The Muslim states that trusted the Muslim conscience about *Zakat* were similarly mistaken. By withdrawing it from the state control, surplus capital did not flow into the public exchequer and most of the welfare schemes too had to be left to private conscience. Islam had saddled the state with the responsibility of controlling and regulating the production and distribution of wealth. The Islamic state was enjoined to do it without becoming a totalitarian colossus. A vital problem of legislation is to determine the boundaries of state interference and individual freedom. Islam had solved this problem in a beautiful and practicable manner. But the Muslim states themselves sabotaged the scheme. *Zakat* is a tax levied on capital; it makes wealth circulate to the organs that need it most. *Zakat* coordinates wealth with social welfare and is the antithesis of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. Muslim thinkers and theologians of note realised the importance of *Zakat* for moral purity and public weal. Here is a passage from Shah Waliullah, the saintly thinker of Islam, about *Zakat:* 'There must be no mistake about the fact that *Zakat* has been ordained to serve two purposes: self-discipline and provision against social destitution. Riches breed stinginess, selfishness, mutual hatred and aversion and even moral degeneration. The best remedy against these evils is the charitable disposal of one's money. This uproots stinginess and cures one of selfishness. It also heals social cleavage and replaces it with a spirit of comradeship. This comradeship becomes a foundation stone of high moral character. As it develops, it fosters nabits of honest dealings. Slowly but surely, these noble traits transform man into a paragon of moral excellence. This means self-improvement through self-discipline.

'*Zakat* is the most effective insurance measure against communal and social misery because a civic structure cannot be sound unless it rests on a sound

economic basis. It is through the working of its economic mechanism that society can minister to the wants and needs of its needy members in accordance with their status in life. It prevents the spread of beggary, because the indigent, the defectives, the cripples, the orphans and the widows and likewise all other categories of the needy folk are duly provided for, and saved the humiliation and disgrace of begging for alms. It is the state which must bear the responsibility for their maintenance. But it can discharge this onerous obligation satisfactorily only when, in addition to the usual source of public revenue, there is an adequate supply of money coming from the rich people in the form of *Zakat*.

The Qur'an has enumerated certain classes of beneficiaries who are entitled to help from the *Zakat* fund:

`Alms are only for the *poor* and the *needy*, and the *officials* (appointed) over them, and *those whose hearts are made to incline* (to truth and the (ransoming of) *captives* and *those in debt* and in the *way of Allah* and the *wayfarer*: an ordinance from Allah and Allah is knowing, wise' (ix. 60).

The two words `the poor' and `the needy' are so comprehensive that it would be impossible to make a list of all those situations in which men stand in need of help for the essentials of life. `Umar included in the category of the needy not only the unemployables but also the unemployed, that is those who would work but could get no work. One category is particularly worth noting. Muhammad, the great liberator of humanity, was very anxious that the institutions of slavery should be abolished. He said that it was a great act of merit to set free a slave. As the entire economic structure of ancient civilisations rested on slavery it was impossible to abolish it at one stroke. The emancipation of slaves was enjoined as a measure of expiation for certain

acts of commission or omission. Fervent appeals were made to the conscience of the masters to treat their slaves with kindness, But according to the principle that all matters of vital social concern must be handled by the state along with the free initiative of the individuals, it was laid down that the state too should make it incumbent on itself to spend a part of its revenues on the freeing of slaves. The state must also come to the help of the man in debt, who had been placed in that predicament by misfortune. The relief of undeserved indebtedness is a duty of the state. The term *fi-sabilillah* (in the way of God) covers all acts of public weal.

It may be said that such a vast scheme of social insurance would require enormous funds; surely it may do so. Spreading out of wealth and equalisation of opportunity were the basic aims of the Muslim polity. If the *Zakat* fund and other public revenues fail to relieve human distress the state can demand more from those who can afford to give. The right of individual ownership is not absolute; it is always subject to public weal. The capitalistic countries destroy their surplus production if the capitalists are afraid of a slump and they are aided by the state in this act of destruction, while there are millions of needy persons who stand in dire need of those things. The capitalists say that fulfilling the needs of the needy by state aid would impoverish the producers of wealth and demoralise those who receive help. The Prophet too was conscious of the fact that the recipient of charity stands in danger of demoralisation. So we find him on the one hand exhorting people to be charitable and on the other hand discouraging beggary.

Chapter 14

RECONSTRUCTION AND RENAISSANCE

It is the postulate of all idealistic philosophy and the basis of all theistic creeds that the fundamental values of life have an eternal and cosmic significance. They are the stable factors in the realm of change. These values of love and truth, beauty and goodness are embodied partially in individuals and things and social patterns. In the words of Tennyson, `They are but broken lights of Thee and Thou, O Lord, are more than they.' All life advances by an embodiment of one or more values and stagnates or retrogresses by thwarting them. At the lowest grade the value of truth is also embodied in physical nature whose conformity to laws mirrors the unchangeability of truth. It was for this reason that mathematics was made by Plato a preparatory stage in his teaching about the unchangeability and eternity of the realm of ideas. To quote Whitehead, `The world which emphasises persistence is the world of value. Value is in its nature timeless and immortal. Its essence is not rooted in any passing circumstance. The immediacy of some moral circumstance is only valuable because it shares in the immortality of some value.' The Islamic concept of God is the concept of the unchangeability and eternal stability of the realm of values. The nature of God is the unchangeable nature of value. Intellectual realisation of this is wisdom which the Qur'an calls the great good *(Khair Kathir)*. The wisdom lived in action creates the good life *(Hayat Tayyibah)*. Man rises above the rest of creation by a greater potentiality and inherent capacity to

assimilate more and more of the nature of God according to which the nature of man has been created. According to the holy Qur'an, right religion is primarily the realisation of this eternal fact. `The nature of God, according to which He has created the nature of man. In the laws of God's creation there is no change. This is right religion.' For the right religion the Qur'an uses the world *Islam* which means seeking internal and external peace through submission to God, that is to say progressive moulding of life in consonance with eternal values. The Qur'an relates two aspects of the universe: *`Alam al-Amr* and *`Alam al-Khalq*: the realm of command and the realm of creation. The realm of command is the source-book *(Umm al-kitab)* of eternal values. Commands of temporal change embodying some value are issued from this eternal book. Things and events are altered in the realm of change for evolutionary and creative purposes but values that are sought to be realised do not alter in their essential and eternal nature. `We do not abrogate a sign nor do We make people forget it unless We replace it by something better or something analogous to it' (ii. 106). Unchangeability of natural laws and eternal values on the one hand and perpetual evolutionary change on the other hand is given by the Qur'an as the nature of reality. This is defined as right religion, which is the religion of all nature, human, subhuman and superhuman.

In the mortal world of transitory fact, the timeless world of immortality is prepetually acquiring temporal realisation. Value-experience introduces into the transitory world of fact an imitation of its own essential immortality. The scientific law of nature and the personal identity of the human ego are outstanding examples of this process.

The Qur'an testifies to the truth of all theistic religions. Its teaching is that from the earliest prophets down to Muhammad the essentials of religion have not

changed. Abraham and Moses and Jesus and Muhammad and all the unnamed and forgotten prophets who proclaimed the unity of creative and beneficent Providence are members of the same fraternity. Habits and customs, conventions and modes of worship. social and economic patterns have been changing according to circumstances and the essence of religion has been manifesting itself in various modes. Again and again humanity lost sight of essential values and fell into the worship of creatures of imagination or some creatures of God were deified. Dogmas and rituals and conventions occupied the central place in every religion and the worship of the latter replaced the worship of the spirit. Emphasis on inessential differences split humanity into hostile religious sects. Cosmopolitanism of true religion became tribal, factional and parochial. Creeds became shells without kernal. Love gave place to hatred and essentials of social justice were forgotten. Religion became a vested interest with certain dominant classes. The stories of the prophets as related in the Qur'an repeatedly mention the opposition and recalcitrance of groups and classes with vested interests to all attempts at reform of faith and practice. Hinduism degenerated into a rigid caste system and the observance of the rules and rituals of the caste became more important than any kind of faith about the meaning of existence. Vedantic Brahmanism and Buddhism, in their metaphysical flights, segregated the realm of permanence from the realm of change and declared the latter as unreal. Christianity too became another-worldly ascetic creed cutting itself asunder from the life of culture and civilisation. The devotees of Christ cut asunder what God had joined and, deifying one great man, they debased the rest of humanity by the doctrine of original and inherited sin which even a thoroughly good life could not wipe off without a dogmatic belief in incarnation, atonement and vicarious punishment.

Islam rejoined the realm of value with the realm of change and proclaiming the essential identity of all true religions distinguished the eternal from the temporal as two aspects of reality without segregating them into independent existences. The revolution brough about by Islam was mainly due to this integral outlook. On account of this teaching Muslim society became dynamic. Life became a voyage of discovery because the Qur'an had inculcated the seeking of God through natural and psychical processes. The knowledge and art of all contemporary and foregoing humanity were eagerly sought and gathered, and new superstructures were raised on a new outlook. The spirit of man had been liberated and nothing intervened between him and his God. Great advances were made in the concepts of social justice and their implementation in civic and social life. During the creative centuries the scholar, the jurist, the artist and the mystic all were free in their search and in their experimentation with life.

But even during the period of this dynamic expansion and cultural development some reactionary forces, actual or potential, were not absent. The farflung domains could not be governed on the basis of political democracy and republicanism. Monarchy usurped the seat of Khilafat and a kind of unordained priesthood became the monopolist of religious knowledge. Patterns of life began to be hardened and fossilised. Stabilisation tended to become static. Against absolute monarchs people began to feel helpless. Inexorable fate overwhelmed the free and creative will. In the matter of religion, self-commissioned intermediaries as custodians of complicated theologies again stood between God and man. Opinions of jurists became hardened into a sort of canonical jurisprudence. People were asked to seek authority for the minutest details in the regulation of their individual and corporate life. Then came the great barbaric Tartar invasion which swept away the

political, social and cultural edifice which was still standing in spite of cracks. The descendants of these barbaric hordes when they settled down to rule over conquered areas were converted to Islam because when they tried to educate themselves, their educators were the conquered Muslims who had been defeated militarily but not culturally. The calumniators of Islam have always repeated *ad nauseam* that Islam spread by the sword. But history belies them from the beginning to the end. When Islam was preached by the Prophet it was not he or his few adherents who wielded the sword but their opponents. The question has to be answered: If Islam spread by the sword, who converted those who wielded the sword? In the very heart of the Muslim Middle East there are still areas of Christian majoriy, and the Christian minority in Egypt is still there after a continuous Muslim impact of about fourteen centuries. The Arabs ruled Spain politically and culturally for more than six hundred years making no attempt to create a Muslim majority by force with the result that they were offered the alternative of forced conversions or expulsion when their political power collapsed. The Turks conquered the best part of the Eastern Roman Empire making no effort to convert their Christian subjects at a period of history when force could accomplish anything. A similar toleration in India kept Muslims into a minority of one to three after about a millennium of political domination. Some Muslims, adopting the point of view of political power, sometimes deplore having missed great opportunities of incorporating Eastern and Western Europe and the whole subcontinent of India and Pakistan in the Muslim world. But the fact is that, althought Islam lost politically, it saved its ideology based essentially on the freedom of conscience adhering faithfully to the glorious Qur'anic injunction that there must not be any compulsion in the matter of faith. The empire of human freedom is far

more valuable than mere political domination whose pendulum continues to swing with the vicissitudes of time and circumstance.

After the conversion to Islam of the Tartars and the Truks, the Muslim world regained its political strength. The Ottoman Turks knocked at the gates of Vienna after having consolidated themselves in Eastern Europe subsequent to the conquest of Constantinople. But the cultural creativity of the Muslims ceased after the thriteenth century. The last great genius that they produced was Ibn Khaldun, the father of sociology and philosophy of history. After that the Muslim patterns of thought and life were set and stereotyped. It looked as if this great culture had done its work and completed its mission. Then started the period of commentators and epigones. It was felt that all truths had already been discovered; to guide one's life one had to search for some proper authority in the past. The patterns of life that were handed down from generation to generation recevied the stamp of divinely-ordained dispensations. All free juristic activity ceased except the quarrel of commentators about inessential details. The Qur'an, the ultimate source of Islamic ideology and Islamic legislation, contains very few laws and regulations; its vital core is some fundamental principles of legislation that are broad - based and liberal. After the Qur'an the sayings and acts of the Prophet are the next source of legislation. This is a very uncertain and amorphous source since verbal transmissions through six or more generations, distorted by ignorance, prejudice, vested interests and factional strifes, cannot serve as sure guides. Great efforts were made to sift the true from the false, the authentic from the spurious. Some great jurists followed the traditionists and formulated codes of individual and social behaviour. But as there was no standard criterion they differed among themselves on minor as well as major issues. Shi'ahs believed in a different set of traditions and

they evolved their own schismatic jurisprudence, which the major body of Sunni Muslims considered heretical and unorthodox. But Sunni orthodoxy too was not one solid and consistent structure. The followers of four great jurists separated into juristical sects leaving a small minority of non-conformist *Ahl-i-Hadith* who do not follow any one jurist and consider themselves free to derive the rules of conduct and personal laws directly from the Qur'an or from the sayings and doings of the Prophet. The jurists whose rulings are not considered as sacrosanct as divine revelation were themselves free within the broad framework of Islam as they understood it, but their followers have shackled themselves in every detail of life adopting it as a tenet of faith that no modification of ancient rulings is now allowed and the door of all new adaptations to changing circumstances is closed. They fight shy of the concept of *ijtihad* which means making a rational effort to draw conclusions from the basic principles of Islam and make new rules for new situations.

The result of all this worship of authority is political, social and cultural stagnation. One of the revolutionary acts of Islam was the abolition of priesthood. Islam countenanced no priestly caste and established no church. But the evils of priesthood entered Muslim society through the back door without ordained priests and without an infallible pope at the top of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. Muslim society suffered from all those ills from which Europe had suffered in the Dark Ages and the medieval period. After the thirteenth century the Muslims stagnated but Eruope began to stir. The West availed itself of the Muslim heritage and started founding universities on the Muslim models, translating Arabic works into Latin. In the first transmission Greek learning came to them in the garb of Muslim presentations. Thomas Aquinas, the angelic Doctor of the Catholic Church, exhibits marked signs of

Muslim theological and philosophical thought. Whoever reads his predecessor Ghazali and then compares the two master minds cannot avoid the conclusion of direct influence. For centuries the adherents and opponents of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) created endless strife in the Catholic Church. European Renaissance is supposed to be caused by the revival of Greek learning but nobody can deny that the ground for European Renaissance was prepared by Muslim influences. Arabian science was the starting point of western scientific thinking. Right up to the seventeenth century European medicine in theory and practice was based on the works of Ibn Sina (Avicenna).

After the Renaissance came the Reformation. This revolt against the Church and the direct appeal to individual conscience and free seeking of God and Christ through independent study of the Bible is an echo of Islamic ideas and some adversaries of Luther were not talking only maliciously when they accused him of imitating Muslim tenets.

The West awakened and developed because the spirit of man long enslaved by feudalism and ecclesiasticism began to liberate itself. The rise of mercantile bourgeoisie sapped the foundation of feudalism. There was a new thrust in sociological functioning. This trend continued to rise in dominance from the sixteenth century onwards within the nations of Central and Western Europe. There was a trend to free individual activity in craftsmanship, in agriculture and in all mercantile transactions. People strove to be relieved from the madness of their traditional rulers, kings, priests and nobles. Society was conceived as functioning in terms of the peaceful competition of its individual members with the state standing as umpire where a breakdown of normal relations occurred. These liberties were achieved primarily by the efforts and in the interests of commercial

middle classes in England, France and wherever in Europe the middle class was the chief factor in social life. The American Revolution, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution were the dramatic events arising from the acceptance of this sociology, and the reconstruction of Europe after the Napoleonic wars was guided by it. Life became healthier, finer, more upstanding in proportion to the dominance of this social individualism. With the rapid development of machine industrialism in the West new trends developed at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Unfettered commercial individualism based on the creed of *laissez-faire,* through its very development, created forces a antagonistic to itself, Mere political democracy achieved by this movement was considered to be insufficient without economic democracy, that is to say, equalisation of economic and cultural opportunity for all classes. It is felt that the practice of 'one-man-one-vote' has not been able to ameliorate the condition of the common man to the extent to which rapidly expanding production of material goods has entitled him.

The minds of the thinkers and reformers turned towards various socialistic doctrines. It was realised by all serious and earnest thinkers that unfettered economic individualism could not be trusted to result in the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers. The colossus of industrialism had engulfed the individual and, having been rescued from feudalism, monarchism and ecclesiasticism, he had been enslaved, depersonalised and dehumanised. Man had to be rescued again from the depredations of his new masters. Everywhere people lost faith in mere political democracy. The pendulum swung from the worship of the individual to the worship of the state in Germany and Italy. Totalitarian dictatorships promised the common man greater material and physical security on conditon that he forgoes all claims to individual liberty. Fascism and Nazism

collapsed after smashing military defeats but Communism strengthened itself still further in Russia and her satellites, annexing new territories until it culminated in the Chinese Revolution which is perhaps the most momentous event of the modern times.

While all these dynamic movements were developing and unfolding with their own dialectic producing positive and negative results and experimenting successively with different political, economic and social systems, the Muslim world remained dormant. But it was evident that they could not be left alone for a long time. Western industrial development created irresistible military power. Industrial nations wanted markets for raw materials and outlets for manufactured goods. Mere martial spirit or individual bravery was helpless against new weapons and economic organisations backed by the power of the states that had identified themselves with the forces of economic exploitation. The Ottoman Empire which extended over three continents could fight no modern war successfully because of lack of modern weapons and modern industrial development which could provide the real sinews of war. The Turks ruling in the eastern parts of Europe did not realise the meaning of the new forces. A degenerate monarchy supported by an equally degenerate theocracy saw no reason to change the pattern of life that had served for centuries but now required drastic overhauling. Only some tinkering of the superstructure was attempted half-heartedly without touching the foundations of life. European nations, ideologically and economically better equipped, were out to conquer the Muslim world, which they knew could offer no effective resistance. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Morocco to Indonesia, Muslim peoples and states were either directly conquered and annexed or were indirectly placed under western domination. The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century found

the Muslim world absolutely prostrate, helpless and enslaved. The ambitions of powerful industrial European states were boundless; so a terrible internecine struggle was bound to come. The great Armageddon of 1914 -1918 shook the whole world to its foundations. The Allies driven by military necessity proclaimed the liberation of all nations, great or small, as their war aim. They professed to be fighting to end all wars and make the world safe for democracy. When they had succeeded and crushed their rivals, they forgot all their idealistic aims. The defeated empires were dismembered according to the new imperialist plans. The Arab peoples who had been made to stab their former rulers in the back found that they had been deceived and for them the change was only a change of masters. A new hypocritical political vocabulary came into existence and annexations were called *mandates.* A Jewish state was planted in Palestine in the heart of the Muslim world. The Great War had not freed the weak nations but it had awakened them and made them self-conscious. The movements for freedom and self-determination everywhere gained in momentum. Then came the Second Great War to complete the work of the destruction of old patterns. The Turks set their house in order on a western nationalistic basis and as a small power became stronger than when they were frittering away their energies in holding a far-flung empire defending it from external attacks and internal sabotage. The Arabs are still struggling to be completely free but are steadily advancing in many directions. Extensive and populous Muslim realms have emerged, viz. Pakistan and Indonesia, possessing enormous natural resources and vigorous manpower. In North Africa the state of Libya has come into existence, and Tunis, Algeria and Morocco are bent on liberating themselves from the predatory imperialism of France. Even semi-civilised and backward

Africa is awakening and offering cause for anxiety to the exploiting white rulers.

Independence from alien domination is the first and indispensable condition for the realisation of all other freedoms. Some Muslim nations are now politically completely free. The question is: In what direction are they developing and what are the aims that they have set before themselves? The Turks have created a republic based on the ideals of nineteenth-century western liberalism. Having experienced that merely a religious bond is not a sufficiently strong motive, they have confined themselves to racial nationalism of the western type and, having had a bitter experience of an obscurantist theocracy, they have separated politics and economics from theology and set up a secular state on the western model retaining religion as a matter of individual conscience. There has been no revolt against religion in general as occurred in Russia, but they have freed themselves from the hold of theologians ignorant of the realities of life. Their view seems to be that religion is concerned with moral and spiritual attitudes but laws, conventions and customs are subject to change to meet new requirements. There was no established church in Islam but there were a fossilised theology and jurisprudence. Halide Edib, the talented and courageous Turkish lady politician and author of *Turkey Faces West*, said to me during the course of a conversation: `We the modern revolutionary Turks are the Protestants of Islam,' In the Arab world, life ranges from ancient Beduin economy and society to partial modernity in countries like Egypt and Syria. Arab nationalism awakened by the impact of the West is making an attempt to strengthen Arab unity within the pale of the great Islamic society. There is a good deal of conscious or unconscious assimilation of the western modes of life with faith and pride in Arab-Islamic culture. Thinkers of eminence in Egypt and Syria are striving to reinterpret

Islam on a broad rational basis. In Indonesia a strong religious party is struggling to raise a superstructure of their newly- won independence on the superstructure of Islam.

Throughout the Muslim world there are cultural conflicts along with political turmoil. Everywhere there is an urge to be fully alive, to thrive and to revive. The revivalist movements are of various categories although there is one thing common to them: the belief that they have to go back for inspiration and models to the original movement of Islam in its pristine purity, disregarding the later accretions and perversions that buried original Islam under a heap of ideas and institutions that were un-Islamic. Let us glance at the various schools of revivalism. One school asserts that original Islam is embodied in the Qur'an; therefore the holy Book alone is to be taken as an authoritative source. But the Qur'an teaches mostly broad principles with very few laws; so within this school too there are those who say that the laws as promulgated in the holy Book are eternal and unalterable, but the others aver that the laws in the Qur'an deal with social situations as they then existed, and therefore it is not the laws but the basic principles behind them that are the abiding parts of religion. The other school of revivalists believe that the Qur'an alone is not sufficient for detailed guidance and so it has to be supplemented by the teachings and example of the Prophet. Their opponents believe that the implementations and rulings of the Propeht are difficult to ascertain because the mass of traditions contain no clear and consistent system and show obvious signs of interpolations. Even if it could be ascertained that the Prophet dealt with a particular situation in a particular manner, its significance should be taken as temporal; in a totally changed situation there should be a new ruling given by men of learning and character who understand the spirit of Islam. Some other revivalists include the juristic codes formulated by the eminent jurists of the early centuries as

unalterable parts of Islam. But these codes like Manu's *Dharma Shastra* are not confined to civil and criminal law only. Tenets of faith and ethics and the detailed regulation of personal life and social etiquette are inextricably mixed in them. These people do not believe in the freedom of legislation or free regulation of individual life except in matters that have not been already defined. But there is hardly anything of vital or ephemeral nature for which they do not seek and find an authority; so, practically, entire patterns of social, economic, political and personal life must become stereotyped. These revivalists are the Talmudists of Islam.

Let us take the example of Pakistan which was carved out of the subcontinent of India to become an Islamic state, where Muslims would be free to follow the Islamic way of life. Before the creation of this state the Muslims had been discussing for about a century the tenets of their creed and the articles of their faith. But because they wielded no political power, religious controversies were conducted only on an academic and sectarian level. They had no national responsibilities; so their discussions were irresponsible, theologial and metaphysical. The political system in which they were obliged to live was not of their creation and they were helpless to alter it. The economic patterns too were imposed on them by the dialectic of history. Their international relations were in the hands of a foreign government. Nor was their education free. All of a sudden, with the emergence of Pakistan, they found themselves face to face with vital problems and concrete realities. In the Objectives Resolution, they affirmed their faith in Islamic ideology and vowed to mould their constitution, their laws and institutions on the basis of the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. But these terms were general and could be interpreted in diametrically opposite ways. There was a clamour for giving them a definite constitutional

shape. After about four years' cogitations and proclamations the basic principles were enunciated; this created an uproar. An attempt had been made in it to satisfy many rival claims but the result was that nobody was satisfied. Different sects of the Muslims were recognised who were quick to announce that they would not be bound by any interpretation except their own. The whole thing seems to have ended in a fiasco because if the constitution is to be based on Islam and Islam is to be interpreted by a score of sects differently, where would be the common and agreed basis without which no further step could be taken? Moving from slogans to realities a deadlock has been created. The state has to decide about the relation of the landlord to the tenant and about the justice or injustice of various types of land tenure; it has to give a verdict about the relations of capital and labour. The state has to decide about its monetary system and banking which orthodoxy considers to be irreligious because usury is prohibited by Islam. The question has to be settled whether bank interest and trade interest are the same as *Riba'* that is prohibited by Islam. The place of women in a modern set-up of life is to be determined. The rights of non-Muslims in a Muslim state have to be clearly defined in a democratic state which should remove all disabilities based on sex or creed.

The inescapable fact is that Muslim life in all its aspects has to be thoroughly reconstructed if Muslims have to occupy an honourable place in the life of contemporaneous and future humanity. The question is whether Islam is a worn out creed and is to be discarded as a hindrance to progress or whether we have to reinterpret it in the light of material and intellectual advance of humanity. Have the Muslims merely to imitate the western progressive nations in all respects or have they to contribute something by a creative synthesis?

Islam originally owed its vigour to a bold synthesis of ideologies that had been separately developed before it by the genius of different nations. It synthesised life on earth with the life in the kingdom of heaven. It brought together God and the world, and God and humanity. Welfare in this life was made a preparation for the realisation of eternal values. Negative spirituality in the form of asceticism and other-worldliness was repudiated and it was inculcated that the totality of life in this world is to be spiritualised by rightful and healthy living. Not the praying devotee but the worker was called the friend of God. Priesthood as the custodian and monopolist of religious vested interests was abolished. Emancipation of slaves was made a great act of virtue and righteousness. The dividing line between naturalism and supernaturalism was erased; the seekers of miracles were asked to seek God in the study of nature within and nature without and religion was defined as life according to that divine nature which is infused in the spirit of man. Economic justice was considered an indispensable condition for moral and spiritual life. Feudalism was abolished by the law of inheritance prohibiting the eldest male heir from inheriting an undivided estate. Racial distinctions were obliterated and man was lifted out of tribalism into cosmopolitanism and universal humanity. Monarchy had to give place to democratic republicanism where the best man had to be elected by a consensus of the community to guide its destinies. Equality of opportunity and equality before law were made the basis of social and civic life. All privileges were abolished. Woman was given an independent financial status retaining her own property and getting an equitable share in inheritance. Marriage was made a civil contract between independent persons of the opposite sex and any legitimate conditions could be inserted in the marital contract. Seeking of knowledge was inculcated as a religious act: not the knowledge of theology

and ritual, but the knowledge of infinite life that envelops man. That is why Greek intellectualism was so easily incorporated in Islamic culture. The glorious principle of the freedom of conscience was made an article of faith.

Original Islam was neither theocratic nor secular in the modern meaning of these terms. Secularism in the West was a revolt against the absolutism of church and priesthood. Islam had abolished these institutions; so there was no need of freeing secular life from the clutches of retrograde theocracies. Between God and man there are no intermediaries.

To revive Muslim society and to give humanity a fresh lead there must be a revival of this original spirit of Islam, but it must proceed along with incorporation of the best that has been developed by others. There is no geographical or racial nationalism in Islam. `Allah's is the East and Allah's is the West.' One may add, Allah's is the past, the present and the future, for Allah stands for the abiding values of life. Muslim civilisation in its epoch of achievement and glory assimilated the best elements of the cultures of the past; the spirituality of the Hindus, the intellectuality of the Greeks, the ethical theism of the Hebrews with its culmination in the spirit of Christ whom the Qur'an called the Spirit of the Lord and the legal genius of the Romans. The contributions of many a gifted nation in the past were taken up by the genius of Islam. The Qur'an had emphasised the oneness of humanity and the unity of all religions along with the unity of God. Islam did not preach any abstract metaphysical unity which had misled the Hindu Vedantists and the neo-Platonists into positing a qualityless absolute. The unity of Islam was the unity of variety and the harmony of diversity. The God of Islam is appearance as well as reality; He is the abstract and the concrete at the same time. Entire existence is an integrated whole in which

abstract monism and abstract pluralism are both considered as mere abstractions. Religion, in ancient terminology, covered the entire field of civilisation and culture; so when the Qur'an emphasises the unity of religion, and makes it a central tenet of the faith, what is meant is the basic unity of all human cultures. Islam taught that there is no monopoly of spirituality or salvation for a group or community that asserts its exclusiveness. It repudiated the Jewish conception of the Chosen People, who deserve God's special care and protection and who could retain their privileged superiority whatever may happen to them. The Qur'an taught that there are no groups or communities privileged for all times. Every community contains good as well as bad individuals; it is the preponderance of good that does for a time make a group superior and confers on it the right of leadership. Otherwise all salvation is individual salvation. Spiritually, no one carries the burden of another man. `Whoever turns his face towards God and does good to others he had his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such, nor shall they grieve' (ii. 112). Religion is divine natural law. When a nation ceases to live in accordance with the law which is the law of man's spiritual nature, the torch of culture is handed over to others who prove their fitness by a superior vision and a superior life. In this manner group superiority shifts from one group to another.

In the history of mankind various human groups have, at different times, made diverse contributions to the stock of human culture. But the highest of cultures develop not by excluding but by including as much as they can, and transforming it by the alchemy of a developing life.From all quarters take that which is good and repudiate that which is bad, is a general Islamic principle. Islam retained and developed as much of Hebraism as could still continue to sustain moral and spiritual life, but the narrowness and

rigidity of the Hebrews was dropped. So Islam retained the valuable and abiding elements of unsullied Christianity and dropped its extreme asceticism and other-worldliness. Similarly, the Muslims inherited, developed and later passed on to the West the intellectual achievements of the Greeks. When we examine the first six centuries of Muslim cultural richness we come to the conclusion that it was the distinctive genius of Islam to synthesise the best elements of all cultures and make that synthesis creative.

Now after centuries of slumber and stagnation they have to recapture that spirit of creative assimilation. The West has advanced steadily, particularly during the last three centuries, in material, social, political and intellectual progress. The stimulus to scientific research had come from the Muslims but having imparted that stimulus to others, they themselves became inactive. Renaissance, Reformation, Industrial Revolution, French Revolution and recent socialistic or communistic upheavals threw all western life into a ferment out of which new ideas and new patterns of life emerged. The Muslims were not even idle spectators; all these movements at first bypassed them and ultimately overtook and overwhelmed them and enslaved them politically and economically. The forces released by these movements are so powerful that they can be ignored only at a terrible cost. As I have said already Islam did not advance by imitation or eclecticism but by creative assimilation. The Muslims can regenerate themselves again by adopting that attitude. It is idle to assert that western progress is only material progress.Life is an integral whole and material progress is not achieved in a vacuum, nor can it remain isolated from other aspects of life; matter and spirit act and interact. Science and technology have advanced by the gradual liberation of man and are capable of improving and changing human life beyond recognition. They can create better hygiene, better health, better standards of living, more

widespread education and all-round greater self-realisation on the part of man. Like all great forces of life they can also be misused, both in peace and war. The task of humanity is to harness them for construction instead of destruction. The Muslims have now to learn it from others and get the best use out of them. Technologically backward countries are bound to become proletarian and submerged nations, hewers of wood and drawers of water for others whom knowledged has given power. Similarly, coming to the political and sociological field, original Islam gave them an exalted idea of democracy which recognised no monarchs, no feudal lords, no privileged classes, and exhorted them to undertake measures in economic life that would prevent the circulation of national wealth among a rich minority. The Muslims lost this ideal very early and have not been able to recapture it. It is others who have struggled and fought to approach this ideology and have devised ways and means of implementing it by amending their constitutions. The slogan of liberty, fraternity and equality was essentially a part of the Islamic faith long before the French Revolution. Taxing of surplus wealth is one of the five pillars of Islam but modern socialism has done it better than any Muslim country. Non-recognition of economic classes was also an integral part of the Islamic pattern of life. Abu Dhar , the economic and soical leveller, preceded Marx and other equalitarians by a millennium. Even at that time the capitalists resisted him and invited the state to intern him but he continued to protest that he was saying only what the Book of Allah and the practice of the Prophet had taught him. Racial and national distinctions were accentuated in the West till they produced a Hitler and a Mussolini. The Communists are better in this respect than even the American and the British Commonwealth. But Muslims, even when they had lost political democracy continued to practise social democracy. The Muslims do not recognise any race or colour

distinctions. The Prophet said, 'Choose the best man from among you as your leader and follow him even if he is a negro.' In his last lecture, when there was a danger of the Arabs becoming intoxicated with racial and national pride, he proclaimed that an Arab had no inherent superiority over the non-Arab nor was the non-Arab inherently superior to the Arab. He called God as his witness that all humanity is one family and an individual becomes superior only by superior character. Islam recognised no other criterion of superiority, and this the famous British historian, Toynbee, acknowledges as the special mission of Islam. Islam has practised the doctrine of humanity with a much greater success than any other culture. This is the most important task for the present and future of humanity. European powers are suppressing millions of Africans denying them elementary civil rights and liberties. The Union of South Africa is a despicably Fascist state in spite of being a part of the Brithsh Commonwealth that proclaims to the world that it is the bulwark of democracy and fundamental human rights. The French, forgetting their slogan of the French Revolution, are struggling to keep North Africa and Indochina for their economic exploitation. When Muslims awaken and arise again, they will sweep away all these hypocrisies because they are alien to the spirit of Islam. The Muslims have to learn something of the technique of western democracies but they cannot subscribe to them wholeheartedly. They have not to imitate slavishly but to pick and choose. When the nations, left behind in the race of progress, awaken they find themselves greatly handicapped in many respects but in one respect they have an advantage only if they could avail themselves of it. Advanced nations have already experimented in various ways the advantages and disadvantages of every step that have already become evident and the way they have solved their difficulties and faced their problems serves as guidance as well as warning

to those who have to tread the same roads later. A country that wants to industrialise now need not pass through the early stages of the British industrial revolution that brought so much misery in its wake. In the sphere of technology no new country thinks of starting first with gas lighting; it begins straight off with electricity generated by hydroelectric installations. The most backward nation can purchase the most up-to-date machinery.

History is philosophy teaching by examples. Nothing in the universe repeats itself exactly, least of all events of human history. But all science is based on the similarities of causation. There are certain basic uniformities in human nature and human situations. It is this fact that makes possible learning from the past and benefiting from the experiences of others. There is no doubt that twentieth century is the century of universal awakening. The two world wars have shaken the foundations of all human institutions. These wars were not merely military and economic conflicts; they were also wars to ideologies. Ideas for which people suffer and die become irresistible forces; they cease to be bloodless academic theories. Muslims can learn much from their own history, diagnosing dispassionately the causes of their achievements and failures, but they cannot understand the modern world nor learn to adjust themselves to it without a close study of European history. Muslim history, as a matter of fact, may be treated as a part of western history. There have always been reciprocal influences, reactions and repercussions. For long centuries beginning from the original thrust of Arab-Islamic vitality passing through the glory of Moorish Spain and the unholy Crusades and the Turkish conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean lands, down to the rise of western powers and the direct or indirect subjugation of the greater part of the Muslim world, the history of the West and the Muslim world is intertwined. Their impact on each other for

good or for bad has been enormous. During the two terribly hot wars and the present cold war the Muslims could not keep aloof; willynilly they had to take sides.

Muslim countries and peoples in their present condition have very little to offer to others in the shape of cultural patterns. They are only left with ideals, but the ideals too have become confused and blurred through the adverse influences of centuries. Some countries are still struggling for political independence and for such the primary goal is to liberate themselves from the stranglehold of foreign domination. There are others that are now virtually politically independent, though they are still under strong external pressures, economic, military and political. In many of them there are internal stresses and strains that are the birth pangs of a new life. Islam, the simple and rational religion of nature based on theism of beneficent providence, teaching the integral and harmonious development of all sides of life, can never become a worn-out creed because the eternal values do not change and the laws of physical and human nature also are unalterable. But all the great religions have amassed around their nucleus a great many laws, conventions and customs so that their original spirit has got buried under a mountain of traditions. Laws and institutions get hallowed by time and everything with a religious stamp becomes sacrosanct defying all attempts at revisions and remodelling. The institution of monarchy is un-Islamic. Hereditary rule is against the very basis of Islam but we still find monarchs with almost absolute powers ruling over Muslim people and the people tolerate it because they cannot easily find any practicable alternative. The spirit of Islamic democracy, however, is asserting itself wherever it finds an opportunity. Egypt has thrown overboard its degenerate monarch and Iran is on the way to abolish monarchy even if the monarch there is now a constitutional ruler. The condition of Arabia, the cradle of

Islam, is unfortunately such that, due to its scanty and scattered nomadic population, it is difficult ot develop the paraphernalia of modern democracy. But in due course Arabia too is bound to change.

Many an Islamic country is living the life of a pre-industrial agricultural civilisation; therefore the chief reform needed is a reconstruction of rural economy. Landlordism in such countries is feudal in practice, though not in theory. The majoirty of the population are tillers of the soil living on subsistence level exploited by landlords and threatened by nature. The lot of the tiller of the soil has to be improved. As there are no other outlets. so there is a great pressure of population on land. To get the best produce out of land, land tenures have to be drastically revised. There is a great dispute going on as to what guidance Islam offers about the land problem. The progressive thinkers and social reformers are of the view that the Qur'anic teaching makes land the common property of human beings. The Qur'an says that land belongs to Allah and Allah in Islamic jurisprudence, is the term used for common weal. The state should so manage land tenures that the land should yield maximum productivity along with equitable distribution. The Islamic law of inheritance would leave no individual large estates but it would ultimately lead to such fragmentation that profitable cultivation would cease, every owner owning an acre or a part of it scattered in many places. Big landlords are generally absentee owners interested only in getting their pound of flesh from the hardpressed, sweating and starving tiller of the soil. There are only a few who take an interest in development, but the major part of the fruits of that development go to swell bank balances or luxury items of landlords. A bitter controversy is going on as to what the Prophet of Islam desired about land tenures and what his strong and able successor `Umar did about it. When fertile lands were conquered by the Arabs they demanded from the

Caliph that they should be divided into estates conferred on the conquering minority. He called an assembly to decide the issue. He said it would be unwise and un-Islamic to make the tillers of the soil as serfs under feudal lords. After overcoming great opposition offered by the greedy, he convinced them that it would be wrong to parcel out conquered lands into private estates. His final decision with which the others also concurred was that all conquered land is national property. The feudal estates of Persia, Syria, Iraq and Egypt, owned formerly by the aristocracy of those lands, were confiscated but the original tillers of the soil were left in possession who paid only the land tax assessed by the state on very humane terms. He went even further and prohibited Muslims from purchasing lands in these territories. Muslim landlords quote examples where the Prophet allowed people in Arabia to own land and enter into a contract with the tenants to get a share of the produce or cash rent. The fact is that, although the Prohet tolerated share cropping, he also said to the people that it would be better if a person kept only as much as he could cultivate himself and gave away the rest to others to cultivate without demanding a share or rent. That would be in consonance with the Qur'anic teaching that land like water and air shoud be free for all, subject only to the conditions of productivity and social justice. All are agreed that there is no legal possession of uncultivated land by any title; whoever tills it becomes the owner. A great step in social justice and economic betterment would be taken when Muslim countries revise their land tenures to the benefit of the tiller and the common man. The absentee landlords owning large estates are seeking the assistance of retrograde theologians to prove that unlimited possession of land like any other property is allowed by Islam. The unholy alliance of such landlords and such theologians tends to create conditions that can culminate only in a violent revolution.

Fortunately, Egypt has achieved a measure of success in solving this problem after the *coup d'etat* of General Neguib. The Shah of Iran made a gesture in this direction by granting ownership to the numerous tenants of his crown lands. The signs of the time are that after monarchy this exploiting absentee landlordism is on the way to abolition. The big landlords are demanding compensations for their properties which, when closely examined, prove to be of very shady origins. It is mostly ill-gotten and exploited property. Which big landlord has earned it by the sweat of his brow or by honest human transactions?

In Pakistan some steps have been taken to improve the lot of the peasant but as among the public leaders, politicians and rulers of Pakistan there is a large proportion of big landlords, the advance is made grudgingly and hesitatingly. Some courageous men who were among the makers of Pakistan and have also been at the helm of affairs after its establishment are sincerely desirous of increasing the measure of social justice and have sincerely exerted their influence in this direction; but they have to overcome the inertia of an old established order and the resistance of powerful vested interests. There is a good deal of theoretical and idealistic interest in the welfare of the common man. Things are on the move but the slowness of the process makes the poorer classes restless and impatient.

In Islamic jurisprudence, like the jurisprudence of any liberal but practical society, no rights are absolute. Rights spring from duties and duties emerge from rights. Where the exercise of an individual right thwarts a necessary measure of public weal, the individual interest has to be sacrificed to the larger interest. Property rights are no exception to this general rule. Land being the main source of sustenance in countries of predominantly agrarian economy, methods of cultivation and systems of land tenure

cannot be left to adjust themselves. If *laissez-faire* is gradually giving way to controlled and planned economy in trade, commerce and industry, there is no reason to leave agriculture, the main source of life for the teeming millions, in the old ruts of tradition and custom. Islam did not promulgate any elaborately worked out system of land tenure; at various places and under various conditions diverse systems were practised or tolerated. But systems have to be remoulded in the interest of general prosperity and social justice.

There is hardly a country in the world that has not felt the impact of Communism directly or indirectly. If people in Asiatic countries could visualise the total picture of Russian totalitarianism, they would surely shudder at many of its ideas and methods. Muslims, in general, masses as well as intellectual classes, barring a sprinkling of agnostics and atheists, are believers in Islam. Some are traditionists, fundamentalists and conservatives for whom eternal moulds were created some time in the remote past, and others are liberal theists who find in Islam a satisfying outlook on life but who are desirous of reinterpretation and reconstruction which they do not cosider contrary to the spirit of Islam. For none of them, atheistic and materialistic Marxism has any ideological or sentimental appeal. But when they see that Russia which was predominantly feudal and agricultural has improved by planned economy, where production has increased and the peasant is getting a fair deal, they are lured towards it. Russia has developed its agriculture by collective farming, by abolishing landlordism and by avoiding the uncertainty and misery of very small helpless holdings. The common man cannot help believing it to be better than the old system which benefits nobody except a few exploiters. The wage-earners in the cities hear that there is no unemployment in Russia and education and medical aid are free and general, and bread, clothing and

shelter, of a standard which may be low as compared with England or U.S.A., but which would satisfy the common man in Asia, are secure, he begins to look forward to Communism as a panacea for all ills. The Communism that appeals to poor countries is hunger communism. Communistic China has made a bowl of rice secure for evey citizen. That is exactly how fascism had appealed to large numbers of Italians. They said, before Mussolini they did not know where their bread came from and whether they would have any, but after Fascism they felt secure in that respect. The United States of America, on account of extraordinary technological development and enormous natural resources, with comparatively limited population as compared with countries like China and India, can pay princely wages to its workers. One hour's wage of a carpenter or a mason in America is greater than two or three days' wage in many another country. A minority of great capitalists may have astronomical bank balances but that does not seem to affect adversely the standard of life of the common man who has his electric kitchen, refrigerator and a television set and generally a secondhand car to ride. The British worker too, individualist and socialist at the same time, feels no attraction for the Russian type; he loves his individual freedom too much. But Muslim countries are poor, their agricultural production is low and industrial production is negligible. There is no industrial proletariat in these countries, from whom Marx expected a revolt and a revolution, but there are large masses of poor peasantry. These countries require an agrarian development and elementary justice for the tiller of the soil. They would prefer it if it comes by peaceful means. But if peaceful means do not avail and the exploiting landlords in power are not prepared to pass self-denying ordinances, the irresistible force of hunger might drive them to desperation and violence. As they are convinced that Islam can help

them if rightly understood and rightly practised, in their appeal to social justice they appeal to Islam. But if conservative and reactionary interpretation of Islam stands in their way, they may begin to suspect religion itself and throw it overboard.

If the Russian or the Chinese experiment has given a better chance to the poor peasant, Islam does not stand in the way of Muslims to learn from them. If they have to learn science and industrial methods from others who have developed them by patient research and the method of trial and error, gradually improving the lot of the common man, why not make their agricultural economy cooperative instead of exploitative?

Islam is a democratic religion but, like spiritual perfection, democracy too is an ideal. The shape that it assumes has varied from epoch to epoch and is changed according to circumstances and according to the temperament and the historical background of the people who embody it in laws and institutions. Early Islam took very bold steps in this direction and did as much as the limitations of historical circumstances would permit. It tolerated many systems which were idealistically obnoxious to its spirit but which could not be wiped out by a fiat. For instance, no ancient ethics or creed could eradicate slavery completely because the entire economic structure was based on it. Islam improved the lot of the slaves and promulgated laws for humane treatment. Emancipation of slaves was inculcated as a great act of merit, and money was to be spent for this purpose by the state. It would be unfair to say that Islam was not democratic because it tolerated slavery and did not abolish it at one stroke. Islam means certain ideal trends according to which humanity has to advance perpetually. In the words of Iqbal, the great poet-philosopher of Islam, it was more of an aspiration than a

fulfilment. It embodied itself in systems and laws but they were temporal forms; when developing life allows, it can be embodied in fresh systems and institutions. The systems of land tenure prevalent at the time of the advent of Islam were reformed in the interest of social justice. Some were tolerated but not considered as ideal. Enormous increases of population and a great pressure on land require fundamental changes. It is not piecemeal reform but whole patterns have to be drastically altered. For instance, mechanised farming was undreamt of before this century. This development by itself, apart from other considerations, points towards large-scale cooperative farming.

When it is realised that Muslims in their present backwardness have to learn much from advanced western countries, it should be clearly understood that they require no tutelage in their ideology. They have not to go to the West to improve their concept of God or the relation of God to man or the relation of man to the universe. Similarly, they have not to learn any new principles of morality, nor have they to learn from the West the ultimate foundations of democracy. These things they have not to learn but to teach to the rest of humanity provided they first recover them from the original spirit of Islam and its basic trends. In the implementation of these things, however, others may have done better. Let them study western systems. But one of them could be taken as a whole and imitated blindly. They have to adapt themselves to their own genius and the spirit of Islam. In the West there are various types of democracy. The British, the French, the Scandinavian and the Swiss democracies have all their distinctive traits. If the Muslims want to advance by mere imitation of any of these models, they will not make a success of it. It is also true that all Muslim countries cannot adapt any one pattern because of geographical, ethnological and economic disparities. Nomads, for instance, cannot have the same type of

democracy as the settled citizens of a civilised state. The Muslim world is a very extensive world. The broad ideals of Islam are the same but the modes of their implementation would differ from people to people and from clime to clime.

Islam is a religion of nature; the Qur'an defined it as such. But nature is not only mechanically uniform nature; it is not confined to mathematically measurable and ponderable phenomena. Besides physical nature, there is human nature and divine nature, the nature of spirit as distinguished from matter. But all nature has a variable as well as a constant aspect; the laws are more constant than the ever-changing phenomena that occur according to those laws. God is ever the same, though His creative activity never repeats itself identically in the same manner. As existence rises in scale, it becomes more and more adaptive. There is no doubt that there is a dialectical movement in human history which is neither materialistic nor intellectualistic. Life creates variety and the course of evolution has been towards greater and greater diversity, more and more unified. Diversity and unity advance side by side and thereby life is gradually enriched. Human institutions must keep in view this fundamental nature of all existence; a new balance has constantly to be created between stability and change or between order and liberty. Determinism and indeterminism are both equally real; matter is not completely determined and spirit is not wholly undetermined.

As life advances, it creates new concepts that would explain new experiences. Laws and institutions have to be remoulded in the constant effort at fresh adaptations to a changed environment. The original ideology of Islam is rich enough for all types of life-ameliorating adjustments. All orthodoxies that begin to worship the letter more than the spirit and draw up detailed codes of life to regulate all

conduct for all times and under all circumstances, become fossils of the once living religious consciousness. What a French free spiritualist said about dogmas is perfectly true: `Dogma is the living faith of the dead that has become the dead faith of the living.

A religion ceases to be alive when its concepts and customs, rituals and conventions become so rigid that all new experiences and experiments are shunned as dangerous innovations. Hinduism lost its vitality by immutable caste restrictions and every act of life from birth till death had to be sanctioned by an ancient code. The Jews lost their spiritual vitality when Judaism was perverted into Pharisaism. The reign of dogmatic Christianity coincided with the Dark Ages. An orthodoxy, if it is sincere, is rooted in reverence and in loyal desire to obey God's will. But by converting occasional legislation and direction into a code for all times it corrupts the true character of the revelation in which it was grounded. As William Temple said in his Gifford lectures: 'The same condemnation awaits all who follow the Pharisaic principle of seeking to order life by immutable rules; the revelation came in living experience; that in it which is of permanent authority is not capable of being stated in formulae'. At the time of the advent of Islam, the Jews were under the domination of the Pharisees and the Christians were subjected to the dogmatism of perverted and obsurantist churches. Islam was a movement of liberation of the human spirit and owed its phenomenal success to its liberalising outlook. There is no doubt that the Qur'an and the Prophet gave the Muslims a few laws but the Propeht was averse to the mulitiplication of laws. He said: `Do not put me too many unnecessary questions; whoever does it is an enemy of the Muslims because the answers given would become binding on them and thereby their liberty of action would be curtailed.[1] On this very account Islam was afraid of instituting a priesthood or establishing a

church for fear that they would begin to act as intermediaries between God and man, curbing the freedom of the human spirit. Priesthood of the Christian type could not develop in Muslim society nor did any priestly caste come into being as with the Hindus, but the theologians gradually developed Pharisaism. They became a class of unofficial theocracy without any hierarchy but with considerable power of obstruction for all necessary and fresh advances. The Prophet had prophesied that a time would come when the Muslims too would develop the dogmatic attitudes that were extant among the Jews and Christians at the time of the advent of Islam. This meant that they too would claim to be monopolists of salvation, considering themselves the `Chosen People' irrespective of their moral and spiritual standing; they too would praise the Pharisaic outlook laying emphasis on external observances, preferring the form to the spirit, preserving the husk and destroying the kernel. All enlightened Muslims now realise that this has actually happened and Muslims are living now under the shadow of their own brand of Pharisaism called Mullaism. The progressive spirit of Islam is smothered by it. The Mulla claims now to be the repositary and custodian of eternal truths. For every vital question he has a ready answer on the basis of some old authority; no new thinker or reformer is authoritative because freethinking is anathema to all orthodoxies. In the sphere of political sovereignty they would prefer monarchy to republicanism calling even an immoral and imbecile king the `shadow of Allah' who rules by divine right. They would not move a step towards reform of land tenure or better modes of cooperative farming. They stand as moral and active supporters of big landlordism. They stood in the way of emancipation of slaves and abolition of this inhuman institution. Islamic teaching tended towards the equalisation of the rights of the sexes but the theologian preaches the

domination of woman by man. The rational Islamic laws of marriage and divorce have been perverted in the interest of the male. They assert boldly that the door of all free, progressive and adaptive legislation is closed; the jurists of a millennium ago have become more authoritative than God or His Prophet. Through the influence of this reactionary orthodoxy, Islam appears to have become stagnant and opposed to all progress.

Islam can advance again only by recovering its pristine liberal spirit and rediscovering its eternal values. Muslims have to develop a theistic democracy with a respect for the liberty and dignity of the individual. Original Islam was an attempt to end all exploitation of man by man, religious, social, political or economic. Muslims advanced when the pursuit of all knowledge and truth was considered a religious duty. They made an attempt to create one humanity by abolition of castes and classes. Freedom of conscience and equality of civil rights were the basic principles of the faith. Muslim society was open to all cultural influences that did not run counter to the basic principles of Islam. Its great jurists were free and liberal. Islamic civilisation was enriched by contributions from Hellenism. The Prophet had exhorted them to seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave even if they had to travel to distant China in search of it. The Muslims can advance now by a similar attitude. They can learn much from western scientific and technological advances. They can also benefit by the study of western socialistic movements. If they are true to the spirit of Islam, they can also successfully meet the challenge of Communism. Everything is not wrong with Communism. It rose as a revolt against capitalistic exploitation and an obscurantist church. Long before Marx it was the Qur'an that had inculcated economic justice by teaching `Organise your economic life in such a way that wealth does not circulate

among a minority of the rich'. Allowing free initiative within legitimate bounds, it had closed all avenues of exploitation. Surplus wealth had to be returned to the *have-nots* of society. The Muslim state was founded by the Prophet as a welfare state. Muslims can learn much from communistic economic planning. But Russian Communism has completely suppressed even the legitimate liberties of the individual in order to achieve its aims. That is something un-Islamic. Nor can Muslims accept the atheistic or materialistic basis of the Marx-Lenin ideology. Russia has done much for the material welfare of the common man and the scientific exploitation of natural resources. That is something to be commended. It is rightly said about Russia that all good things said about it are right and all bad things said about it are equally right. The Soviet impact on even the western countries opposed to Communism is undeniable. Muslim countries too cannot escape that impact. Muslims can successfully meet the challenge of Communism by vigorous rethinking about Islam and what it originally stood for. Communism is a dynamic movement with a great appeal to all poor and unprivileged classes. A static and stereotyped Islam cannot meet that challenge. If Muslim states do nothing for the abolition of untenable privileges and are indifferent to the material uplift of the common man, they cannot diminish the appeal of Communism. Only a better type of socialism can meet that challenge. Man does not live by bread alone, but it is equally true that man cannot live without bread. Now the poor man is not going to be satisfied for long on promises of compensation in the next world. Muslims were asked to pray for welfare in this life as well as in the next. Islam attempted social, political and economic reconstruction as a prerequisite to healthy, moral and spiritual life. Islam did not forget that human life has a physical basis too and hence physical needs can be ignored only at a great peril to the life

of the spirit itself. Islam conceived of life as an indivisible entity. The other-worldly spirituality as well as mundane materiality are both abstractions which, if taken as self-subsistent realities, lead to the fragmentation and deterioration of life. Life here and now is to be so lived that every act is sanctified by the infinity of the spiritual background of existence. Life must develop as an integral whole, as the spiritual unity of an infinite diversity. Religious concepts and institutions, when they get divorced from the realities of a new environment, are depleted of life-ameliorating forces. Similarly, mans' physical life divorced of all spiritual basis stultifies and gets stunted because of being uprooted from an ultimate reality.

Reconstruction of Muslim life, in all its aspects, must proceed on that broad view of religion which Islam presented to the world. The church and the state, the laity and the clergy, the spiritual and the mundane are dichotomies that resulted from the exigencies of western political and religious history. No Muslim who is conversant with the spirit of Islam believes in this compartmentalisation of human existence. Religion should serve as a guide to an individual to attain the highest possible development of spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical faculties. Its functions are to maintain and harmonise relationship between God and man and also between man and man besides offering a correct attitude towards the universe in which man lives. Having got sick of reactionary theocracies in which a class of spiritual monopolists hampered the free development of human personalities, nations swung to the other extreme of secularism which got identified with materialistic rationalism. When religion began to thwart life, politics had to be separated from religion so narrowly conceived. Intellectual freedom too had to be achieved by turning away from dogmas and theologies. In the dialectical movement of history this antithesis had to develop, which,

however, cannot rest in itself and must pass over into a new synthesis. If man cuts asunder what God has joined, the sundered parts tend to atrophy. There is no doubt that the antithesis too develops certain instrumental values even in its onesidedness. Life has to negate something at every step in order to proceed towards a richer affirmation. Scientific and economic materialism of the West developed certain aspects of life which could not have been developed within the framework of religious orthodoxies and the vested interest of the theologians. When the Muslims ceased to advance, the impetus passed to the West and during the three centuries of western dynamism the entire Muslim world was static and dormant. The twentieth century is the century of awakening. The two world wars, the inevitable products of materialistic development, have shaken all sociological and ideological structures. Man everywhere has been compelled to revalue all his accepted values. Even where there has been no direct revolutionary upheaval, there is indirect mental revolution and new concepts have been recasting all institutions. Everywhere there are stresses and strains. Old ideas and fortified vested interests are fighting a rearguard action. Science and technology have unified the world by annihilating distances. No nation can now stand apart from others in political, economic or intellectual isolation. Any force acting in any part of the world has immediate repercussions in every other part. Humanity has already become one organism though universal harmony is still a distant goal. The Muslim world is destined to play an important part in the achievement of one humanity. From Morocco to Indonesia Muslims occupy the central belt. They belong to the East as well as to the West. The Qur'an called them the Nation of the Middle Path. Islam was so, geographically as well as culturally. Awakened Islam now can play the same role. The Muslims are in the best position again to achieve a mighty synthesis by realising the

integrating spirit of Islam. There is still a lot of inertia to overcome; there is still a lot of knowledge to gain; the battles of political freedom are still to be fought against the remnants of western imperialism. Many an internal convulsion is needed to shake them from the inertia of centuries. In the interest of Islam itself they have to purge their orthodoxies from all un-Islamic accretions. The abiding values and eternal truths have to be disentangled from much that masquerades as religion. Islam still has a mission of unifying humanity on the basis of a theistic faith. The Muslim world can become the best bulwark against the forces of atheism and rank materialism. Besides creating a universal Muslim brotherhood the Qur'an envisaged a broader brotherhood of all theists. Iqbal, the great philosopher and seer of Islam, in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* wrote: 'Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve out of the hitherto partially revealed purposes of Islam that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.'

Chapter 15

MUHAMMAD THE LIBERATOR

Whenever a modern thinker contemplates the essentials of human well-being, he arrives at the conclusion that what is required is liberty, fraternity and equality. Instinctively or logically he puts liberty as the first requisite. Man is neither a material object subject to the inexorable determinism of the laws of matter, nor does he belong to the vegetable kingdom subject only to the laws of growth and decay, nor is he a mere animal whose life is guided by unerring instincts working as instruments of biological self-preservation and procreation. Although there is determinism from matter to animal life, still one could detect gradual realisation of more and more liberty from one stage to the other. The plant is freer than inorganic matter in the sense that it has freed itself from the pure mechanism of matter and is guided by its own vital urges. Similarly, the animal is freer than the plant because it is endowed with movement and an incipient consciousness which makes the range of its choices much wider, and it has much larger capacity of adaptation to the environment; to some extent it moulds the environment to suit the purposes of its life. When we arrive at man, there emerges as new instrument of life. He is endowed with reason besides his instincts, many of which he has in common with the higher animals. The higher animals were merely conscious; man has become self-conscious. The widening of consciousness is also the ascent of reason and, side by side with this, the scope of liberty too increases. It is obvious that the progressive evolution of life advances

liberty simultaneously with consciousness and reason. Greek philosophers defined man as a rational animal; with them the problem of free-will had not attained that prominence and importance that we find later on in Christianity and Islam. For Greeks, the liberty of choosing between various alternatives belonged to the mixture of irrationality with reason. They did not realise that liberty was as much the essence of man as reason. Whoever saw that man was born free but was everywhere in chains uttered an essential truth about man.

Let us start with the Qur'an to study the Islamic view of human liberty. By their adversaries Muslims are stigmatised as being believers in Kismet, Fate or Predestination. This is only a partial and, therefore, misleading view of the Islamic creed. There is no doubt that, according to this teaching, Allah is the source of all existence, the cause of all causes. Whatever exists, exists because of His will. He is the creator, the supervisor and the guide. If He had so willed, people would not have erred. If He had so willed, He would have made human beings uniformly good, incapable of choosing the wrong way. The Qur'an says: `He did not will it to be so. He did not will it because He did not want to make human beings automatons of virtue; the paragon of existence could not be made compulsorily virtuous. Liberty is the essence of virtue; where there is no liberty there may be goodness of an angelic type or of a subhuman variety as the fitness or beauty or goodness of a plant or an animal or a phenomenon of nature, but that is not what we understand by virtue.

According to Islam, God is essentially free; absolute freedom belongs only to Him. He creates what He wills and He does what He wills. The intellectualists ask whether this omnipotence does not engulf all other freedoms. But if we

take the Islamic view of God and His relation to man, the problem can be easily solved by another approach. The Qur'an says that the spirit of man is the divine spirit itself; if God is free, His essential attribute of freedom is shared by man. Man was made God's vicegerent on earth; hence he too possesses delegated freedom. Adam's first exercise of liberty manifested itself in disobedience. However undersirable disobedience may be, it is a proof of liberty—freedom even against his creator. The revolt of the adolescent is a sure sign of the coming of age. Man is destined to acquire divine attributes; that is the goal of his life. He has to cross over from external deteminism to self-determinism which is the same thing as liberty. His humanity and his liberty are identical. A man is only human to the extent that he acts freely. Even when he makes wrong choices freely he is more human than when he is made to act rightly under compulsion.

Granting of freedom to man is a free act of divine grace. It does not take away anything from the omnipotence of God, nor does it diminish His all - encompassing mercy. But this liberty too is not chaotic; it is also subject to divine laws. As the Qur'an says: `We have shown man the two ways'; it is open to him to make himself blessed or cursed. For man, God has established a moral order. Man's freely chosen good and his freely chosen evil are weighed in a sensitive balance. As moral evil is the result of liberty granted by God, it might be said that even this evil ensuing from liberty is divinely willed; rewards and punishments accrue from good or evil actions but the moral law is divinely promulgated. An intellectualistic logic or crude materialism, which makes all life including the soul of man a necessary product of blind forces, may not be able to understand the nature of freedom but entire human life is based on this intuition. Even materialism is now gradually receding from its old determinism and conceiving of atoms

as endowed with freedom of movement. Biology too is moving away from mechanistic determinism, conceiving all life as a goal - seeking activity.

Whatever hypothesis the natural sciences might choose, freedom shall remain as the essence of the human spirit. The Qur'anic verses describe the omnipotence of God and the moral responsibility of man in the same breath, and a superficial logician is perplexed by the dilemma. But the Islamic view is sound and free from any inherent contradictions. By granting freedom to man, God has not abdicated nor is the order of nature violated.

Liberty is essential for man's ascent towards divinity and therein lies the dignity of man. The Qur'an says man is destined to rule over nature; how could he command nature if he were a slave of natural forces which push and pull him according to their own deterministic laws? How could a being with the spirit of the Lord in him be anything but free? But liberty is not an end in itself. Islam teaches that we are made free in order freely to surrender our will to the will of God; thereby man does not become a slave but a participator in the universal freedom of God. Only the spirit of the Lord can make us genuinely free. Liberty iself may not be an intrinsic value but it is an indispensable condition for the realisation of all the intrinsic values of life. The freedom of the seeker of truth leads him to truth; if this free pursuit is hampered, truth is not attained. The freedom of the artist creates all great art. Freedom from want clears the way for the human soul to advance towards the things of the spirit. Liberty is the breath of all progress; it is the chief prerogative of man. All that makes existence valuable depends on it; it is as sacred as truth itself. As compared with liberty, life itself is comparatively an inferior gift. Ingersoll expresed this truth most rhetorically: `What light is to the eyes, what air is to the lungs, what love is to the

heart, liberty is to the soul of man. Without liberty the brain is a dungeon, where the chained thoughts die with their pinions pressed against the hingeless doors.' It is the best beloved of best men; `free lives and lips, free hands of men free born.'

Life is offered to us as a synthesis of determinism and indeterminism. To some extent we are determined by our environment and by our heredity or the constitution with which we are born. There is also divine determinism; we are born with different aptitudes and varying capacities. There is also social determinism which instills into us good and bad biases and compels us to move within ruts made by hallowed customs and ancient usages. The instincts within our own individual selves also become imperious and tend to make us slaves of passions. The thesis of Islam is that all this is there but still man remains potentially free; this essence of his spirit cannot be alienated from him. The human spirit must be so strengthened that it overcomes all these resistances; it is by the overcoming of obstacles that the soul is fortified against the onslaughts of fortune.

The mission of all true religions ought to be the emancipation of man because only truth can make man free. For about a century there has been a revolt against religion because it has been considered to stand in the way of free human development. It was thought religion was a product of man's ignorance, a creation of false fears and hopes. Some thought it presented a spurious science and stood in the way of free scientific inquiry. The communists said that it was designed as an opiate for the masses. Nietzsche put forward the thesis that it was an invention of the slaves to delude their masters in order to protect themselves. Others revolted against religion because it curbed the exercise of useful and legitimate human instincts. Another cause of revolt against religion was that people had ceased to believe

in life after death and had become indifferent to the other-worldly aspects of their creeds. The phenomenal progress of physical sciences, the development of rationalism and the ever-growing craving for liberty are responsible for this revolt. This revolt is not due so much to any perversion of human nature as to the perversion of creeds in which man was asked to believe. Positive religions everywhere tend to become reactionary or conservative and orthodoxies get fossilised. This is true about all religions. The worship of the letter smothers the spirit; manmade laws and conventions become more important than life itself. In this book it is the original spirit of Islam and its essential outlook on life which we have attempted to discuss. Islam, through the centuries, has accumulated much which is not only not essential to it but is positively hostile to it. We must get back to the core of the creed.

When we look at Islam from this angle we find that its essential purpose was the liberation of man, to make him free for complete self-realisation. This liberation released immense human energies in all directions. Hitti, the great historian of Arabic civilisation, is perfectly right in the assertion that the number of heroes produced by Islam in a span of about two or three decades has no parallel in history. They were not only conquerors and military heroes—their heroism was manysided—they were men who revalued the old existing values of life and remoulded personal, social, economic and political life according to new ideals.

The hero of all these heroes was the Prophet himself. He was prophet, administrator, legislator, moralist, reformer, political scientist and economist—all traits gathered in one personality. We must look at his life from this point of view that, besides placing before humanity essential human values, he explicitly planned to free human

beings from all the shackles that chained them from within and from without. This Prophet has been the greatest liberator of mankind. There was hardly any aspect of manifest or disguised human slavery to which he did not turn his attention, in order to diagnose the disease and suggest the cure.

Let us start with the fundamental doctrine that he preached as the basis of all true religion. He emphasised the unity of God, Whose creation was a visible sign of His presence but Who in His essence was invisible. Epicurus said that men could never be really free unless they are freed from the fear of gods. Muhammad freed humanity from the fear of gods. He said that no gods existed in reality; they are the creations of vain human desires. The invisible God Who truly exists is the light and life of entire creation. He demands nothing but rationality and virtue. He is the ideal of life, as much as the source of it. He possesses the highest attributes, which also, in a limited way, form the values of human existence. Nothing stands between Him and man. He is nearer to man than his own jugular vein. No intermediaries are needed. When a call emerges from the human soul, God responds. He demands no animal or human sacrifices to be propitiated. Every soul is directly responsible to Him and, in the matter of the moral law, all are equal before Him. Man need not fear the phenomena of nature; nature is meant to be subservient to him. Man must fear the consequences of the violation of natural and moral laws, and these laws have their source in the will of God; this fear may be called the fear of God. God Himself is not an object of fear; He is a loving God and, as the Prophet said He is more loving to His creatures than a mother is to her children.

The Muslim savants as well as saints have always believed and felt that all the ameliorative attitudes towards

life follow as corollaries from this belief. When fear of imaginary gods and natural forces is eliminated from human consciousness the immense possibilities of human life begin to be actualised and wisdom as well as courage follow from it. It has been established by modern psychological research that fear is at the bottom of most of the complexes from which a large number of men suffer; countless phobias paralyse the life-activities of human beings and make them unable to face life. A person sincerely believing in an all-powerful, beneficent God is cured of all fears; such a person goes about the business of life, facing pleasant and unpleasant situations with an equanimity that is enviable. He has no feeling that he is at loggerheads with a blind or a hostile universe. He does his best and leaves the result to God.

It was not only imaginary gods and the fear of natural forces that had overawed man into abject submission. Man's unlawful mastery over man had done perhaps a greater damage to his dignity. Rulers had been defied and demanded to be worshipped as visible gods. Men had gained mastery over their fellow-beings as if they were cattle or mere instruments of production. Millions of men wasted their labour to erect skyscraping pyramids to entomb these dead deities, who did not cease to command even after their death. Slaves were slaughtered and buried with them to be ready to serve them at the time of resurrection. Out of the annals of the prophets, the Qur'an repeats more than once the story of Pharaoh and Moses to prove that a great prophet is always a liberator. Rulers become tyrannical when they usurp the place of the invisible God and cease to rule according to the eternal law of social justice. The Prophet realised keenly that the autocratic monarch is the greatest usurper of human liberties. He envisaged the ideal state as a democratic republic in which the people choose the best man to administer the affairs of the state. A Hadith

in Bukhari's *Sahih* relates that the Prophet trembled with emotion while addressing the people from the pulpit to an extent that it was feared he might fall when he denounced these autorcatic, immoral, tyrannical, deified rulers. He did not say like Christ: `Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. 'He said categorically There shall be no Caesars'. No ruler is to be recognised until he recognises the God above him in profession as well as practice and administers the realm as a sacred trust. He is not entitled to take from the public goods more than his minimum necessities; he must set the example of simple and honest living. That is how the Prophet lived himself at the height of his power, and that was the practice of his immediate successors. Islamic state was a welfare state and the chief of the commonwealth was in *loco parentis* towards the citizens. The Propeht whom his people honoured with the title of *al-Amin*, the trustworthy, wanted a system of government in which the state is to be treated as a trust. Later, when `Umar the Great was at the helm of affairs he said that the head of the state should act as if he were appointed a guardian of the property of orphans. If he can sustain himself by his private means he should take nothing from the property of the orphans as his wages for administering it; if he has no other means, he is entitled to take only the minimum for his simple requirements. It is the duty of the chief to see that nobody starves in his realm. It is his duty to compel the rich to contribute to the welfare of the poor. It is his duty to see that all are equal before the law; in that respect all privileges must be abolished. It is his duty to watch that there is no exploitation of the weak by the strong. The short and pithy address of the first Khalifa, Abu Bakr, contained this declaration that he would make the strong man weak who had no right on his side, and he would make the weak strong who had the right on his side. There must be a right or direct approach to the governors

and the chief of the state, and the poorest citizen shall have the right to lodge a complaint in the court against judges, governors and even the head of the state. These were not merely utopian ideals or counsels of perfection; they were actually practised in early Islam. This was the political liberation of man at its best and no subsequent revolution for the rights of man has ever advanced an inch further than this teaching and practice.

The second great act of liberation successfully accomplished by the Prophet was the emancipation of man from priesthood. In many ancient cultures the priests formed a class that became the guardian of the souls of men. Religion was practised by this class as a profession, venerated as superior to every other occupation. In the Christian civilisation they were organised as a church with a hierarchy culminating at the top in the person of an infallible pope. The rulers as well as the subjects of Christendom were thoroughly in the grip of the church; that the relation of secular government to the overriding power of the church constitutes a long history of conflicts between these two powers. The relation of organised religion to the state became a problem for the European countries and people were subjected to dual loyalties that were often contradictory. Protestantism developed as a revolt against the Roman Catholic Church but even in the Protestant countries the trouble continued to crop up in new forms. In Europe the revolt against the church reacted adversely even on the attitude towards religion in general. Religion, whenever it assumed as organised and institutional form, became reactionary and suppressed essential human liberties. Islam has always had people specially versed in religious knowledge but they never became priests in the sense in which other religions and cultures developed this class. Hinduism did not create an organised church in manner of the West, but it developed a whole caste of

priests, everyone born in this caste was a priest by birth. From birth till death all important occasions required ministrations by a person of this caste; entire life became sacerdotal and highly ritualistic. It was in the interest of this class to fabricate mysterious and complicated ritualism which only the adepts could handle. As priesthood developed, the essentials of religion were lost; even morality was subordinated to formalism, and the power instinct of the privileged caste.

Islam was the first religion which realised this danger; for religion, instead of making men free, had enslaved their spirit. This evil could not be remedied unless every man became his own priest. To start with, Islam did away with the necessity of having special temples or special places of worship where God alone could be worshipped. No doubt, mosques were built, the first one as a thatched hut, to build which the Prophet himself worked as a labourer. But it was the Prophet himself who said that `one of the special features of my religion is that every place on the wide earth of God is our place of worship'; for our prayers no architecture is necessary. For prayers no aesthetic paraphernalia and no abracadabra is required. The man who leads the prayers is not an ordained priest; he wears no formal and professional robes and carries no aura of mystical sanctity about him. Any Muslim, selected in a very off-hand manner on account of his knowledge and character, is asked to conduct the service. Neither at birth nor for any kind of baptism, nor at the wedding, nor at the funeral is any priest requried. On every important occasion and in every critical situation the Muslim has nothing else to offer except prayers; and in prayer, except respectful and devotional postures, there is no ritual for which a professional religious man may be required. Islam abolished religion as a profession. Religious learning may be speciallised by some. but religious life as a profession was

discountenanced by Islam. This was an immense step towards the emancipation of man who was enslaved by priesthood as much as he was shackled by purely lay and secular powers. Priesthood everywhere had set itself up as an intermediary between gods or God and man; man was supposed not to have any direct access to his creator and to approach Him either the magic of a ritual or the ladder of a priestly hierarchy was necessary. Directness of approach followed from the Islamic conception of God being nearer to man than his own self. The problem of theocracy as it troubled the other nations never troubled Islam, because the problem of church *versus* state could never arise in the Islamic polity. As to developing a priestly caste, nothing could be farther from the spirit of Islam. Like other people following other religions, Muslim society too developed sectarian differences and differences of a dogmatic character about inessential points which the ignorance of man magnifies into questions of life and death. But even in the most intellectual and freethinking epochs of Islamic history, hostility towards the essentials of Islam never developed. Even today in the so-called secular Muslim states like Turkey, the people are essentially religious. Muslim society never exhibited the phenomenon of a mass rationalist rage against religion as it was witnessed in the French Revolution nor anti-God campaigns encouraged and sponsored by Communist Russia. The mystics and freethinkers of Islam have produced edifying and fascinating literature, denouncing formalism and hardened orthodoxy which worshipped the letter more than the spirit but neither the intelligentsia nor the masses have ever doubted the fundamental verities of Islam. As there never was an organised church to fight against nor a priestly caste to violate the democratic spirit of Islam, Muslim society, in all its strata, at every level and in every epoch, has been essentially religious without being fanatical, except for occasional outbursts of fanaticism in

individual cases. This is due to two factors. The creed of Islam is so simple and so rational that the fundamentals cannot be easily attacked. The philosopher appreciates and interprets it intellectually and the mystic verifies it as a religious experience. Besides the unity of God the only other requirement is a virtuous life describing virtue as the essential nature of the real self of man and a common heritage of all noble souls. Islam would have surely gone the way of other religions if it had not taken care to abolish priesthood as a caste or a profession. How much humanity is indebted to Muhammad for this liberation of the human spirit, every honest historian of culture shall have to admit.

Another great attempt at liberation was the Prophet's attitude towards slavery. His contemporary world was a world of masters and slaves and there were more slaves than masters. The entire economic structure of society was based on slavery. Great philosophers like Aristotle had declared that slavery was a natural institution because they could not envisage the socio-economic life of humanity that could be built or sustained without this inhuman institution. It has been asserted that all ancient cultures were based on the exploitation of man by man; culture required leisure for higher pursuits and this leisure could be created only by slave labour. Men were no longer persons; they were only means and not ends in themselves; like animals and other material things they were also treated merely as means of production. The Prophet started with exhorting people to treat their slaves with kindness. Any ill-treatment of the slave entitled him to seek redress. The Prophet is reported in *Sahih* of Bukhari to have witnessed a master beating his slave in an inhuman manner. The master was severely reprimanded and on having expressed regret he was asked to free the slave to expiate his sin. A slave was entitled to earn his freedom by paying off the master from the savings of his wages. For a number of minor and major

wrongs, Islam substituted the emancipation of slaves for fines or other forms of punishment. When the Qur'an enumerates cardinal virtues, the emancipation of slaves is often included in the list. Before Islam, the prevalent custom was to murder the captured enemy or to keep him as a slave. Islam gave preference to the prisoners of war being released on the payment of ransom or as a matter of charity. The ransom demanded was not always in the shape of money. The Prophet said that whoever could teach the children to read and write would be set free. Among the uses of voluntary charity, the emancipation of slaves was recommended as an act of great merit. *Zakat*, the funds collected by the state from those who had surplus wealth, was to be used to alleviate all kinds of human distress; setting free the slaves by paying off their masters was one of the purposes for which *Zakat* funds were to be expended. Masters who still wanted to keep their slaves were allowed to retain them on condition that they fed and clothed them as they fed and clothed themselves. Khalifa `Umar took a further step in ordering that no Arab could remain a slave. If Muslim rulers later on had progressed and legislated on these lines, slavery should have been wiped out from Muslim lands before any other civilisation dreamt of it. It is unfortunate that the socialistic and equalitarian programme of Islam received a severe setback when Islam passed into the unhappy phase of imperialism. Even then Islam had so much humanised Muslim attitude towards the slaves that some of them, on becoming honourable members of Muslim households, attained to great positions of eminence and it is in Muslim history alone that one reads of slaves founding ruling dynasties, and becoming ministers and commanders of armies under powerful rulers. Some of them became famous savants at whose feet sat the noble children of free men. Bilal, the much loved companion of the Prophet, was a freed slave who commanded more respect than many an

Arab aristocrat. Slavery that continued in Muslim lands for centuries, however deplorable it may be from the point of view of the Prophet's vision of a classless society of free men, had nothing in common with that inhuman institution, the cruelties of which are tragically pictured in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The Christian West cannot blame Islam for not abolishing slavery by a prophetic edict because it took Christendom itself more than a millennium after Islam to start an anti-slavery campaign which in America had moral as well as economic motives. Muhammad abhorred slavery and proposed measures to abolish it, not because slave labour was industrially uneconomical but because it violated the dignity of human beings, making one man the master of the other, while God alone is the master of all human beings and He alone could be a loving master.

We now turn to another item in the liberation movement started by the Prophet of Arabia. He saw that everywhere woman had been enslaved by man and was considered to be mere chattel having almost the status of slaves. It was considered a shame to have a daughter; therefore many of them were buried alive after birth, and some were similarly destroyed with impunity even after reaching puberty. Muhammad raised his passionate voice against this cruelty. He said, `The best among you are those who are good to their wives"; `Whoever makes sacrifices in bringing up two daughters with love and mercy shall go to paradise'; `Paradise is under the feet of your mother.' The Prophet helped women in all possible ways to get equal status with men. The Qur'an says: `They have rights similar to those against them' (ii. 228). The Qur'an preaches a common morality for both the sexes in every respect; in most of the moral injunctions they are mentioned together. Women shared with men equality before law. They were granted civil rights which some of the civilised countries refuse to grant them even today. Marriage was made a civil

contract between man and woman in which any lawful conditions could be inserted. She was granted the right of inheritance and the right to own property in her own name. Till recently even the British woman was fighting for this elementary right.

One of the most unjust charges against Islam is that of permitting polygamy under certain conditions. But why pick up only Islam from among all ancient cultures and religions that permitted almost unlimited polygamy? Most of the Old Testament prophets, including Solomon the Wise, practised unrestrained polygamy which was an integral element in all patriarchical systems. It was forgotten by the critics of Islam that it was the only religon that restricted it, hedging it round with conditions difficult to be fulfilled by any man who burdens himself with this responsibility light heartedly. The Qur'an permits it only if one could do equal justice to more than one wife uttering a warning at the same time that one will find it almost impossible to do justice in every respect. Marriage is not merely a matter of romantic love; it is essentially biological, having an indispensable economic aspect. In a small community denuded of its manpower by incessant wars, there is a surplus of large number of women who must be protected and supported. Unless these women are legally wedded and get economic support and social esteem they become a disgrace and danger to society. What happened in the West after the two great wars should be an eye-opener to all *pseudo*-moralists who tolerate prostitution and prefer illegal, clandestine promiscuity to restricted legal polygamy which becomes a social necessity under certain circumstances. There is no doubt that the permission to take more than one wife is often misued. If a law is violated and looseness is connived at, it is not the law that is to be blamed. If we look at it in the correct historical perspective we could see that far from degrading woman, it was a

measure for her protection which prevented her drifting into penury and disgrace. This measure made Muslim society sexually safe and healthy and prostitution as a profession never developed in Muslim lands until they were contaminated by other cultures. Millions of these unprotected women are a canker in the social organism of the West, spreading physical as well as moral disease. In the missionary and political campaign against Islam the false idea was spread in the world that Islam had cramped the life of women. It was said they spend their lives shut up in their homes; fairy tales about the Shaikh and his *harem* were circulated to create the impression that this was the life Islam offered to woman. This institution was really the unholy product of degenerate royalties and aristocracies; as bourgeois classes tend to imitate these parasitic classes, some individuals of these classes too practised it as a sign of respectability. All such customs and conventions are un-Islamic and take away much from the equality of rights and opportunities granted to women by Islam. If Islam were rightly practised the Muslim woman would become the equal of man in every respect in which nature allows her that equality. Muslim women have been glorious rulers, counsellors and jusrists and great savants whenever un-Islamic conventions have been brushed aside. They have even commanded armies, and, when necessity arose, fought as soldiers as they did in early Islam or recently in the Turkish war of independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. In the awakening of the Muslim world during the present century, women are playing a most important role. As we have already stated, Muslims generally believe in Islam with a deep-rooted conviction. If there were anything in original Islam to curb their healthy, free activities, this phenomenon could not have taken place. Whenever women struggle to recapture their lost liberties, it is always through an appeal to original Islam. This is a clear

proof of the fact that in the liberation of man, Islam had not forgotten the woman. A comparative study of legislation about the rights of women in different civilisations would bear out the truth of these assertions. It is a vast subject with which it is difficult to do justice here in this short book.

We now turn to the important subject of the economic liberation of man. Modern socialists rightly emphasise the economic aspect of life. We have dealt with this topic elsewhere in this book at some length. Marxian economists say that all other aspects of civilisation and culture, including morality, art and religion, are only byproducts of what they comprehensively call the modes of production. Religion before Islam had laid emphasis on the spiritual and moral attitudes of man in isolation from his economic life. The rich were exhorted to be kind to the poor. Spirituality was equated with poverty. It was preached that the poor would find it easier to enter the kingdom of heaven and it would be more difficult for the rich to enter it than for the camel to pass through the eye of the needle. The religious man was expected to despise the goods of this world; the next world would compensate him for what he lacked in this mundane existence. The poor were asked to suffer in patience for a short while for this existence was after all very transient. The early Christians believed that the end of the world was very near; when the whole thing is going to blow up very soon, why bother about material goods? Christ had said that man did not live by bread alone; the sustenance of the spirit was more necessary. But as the early Christians were very poor they begged God to give them their daily bread. In Buddhism too, the spiritual man was not a wage-earner but a *Bhikshu* or a religious mendicant who lived on the charity of the wage-earners. These religions despised the world as illusion or vanity and preached purely moral attitudes to the rich as

well as the poor. All these religions preached the virtue of private charity without any conception of remoulding the economic order in such a manner that exploitation should become difficult if not impossible. The Prophet of Islam was a practical idealist; he realised that metaphysical or utopian idealism had little use for the common man. In the entire scheme of Islam the body is indissolubly linked with the soul. The soul is not a product of the body but on this physical plane of existence, the spiritual and the physical aspects are so interlinked that whatever happens to the one affects the other either directly or indirectly. The world of God's creation is a real world; everything in nature is a gift of God meant to be enjoyed by His creatures. There are, no doubt, realities higher than the physical world but the physical world too is spiritual in its own way. The body must be looked after to become fit and strong and pure in order to help the harmony of the spirit. Muhammad transformed all honest work into worship. He said that the man who is seeking livelihood for his family is also worshipping God. `The wage-earner is a friend of God.' He was the first great religous teacher who announced in clear terms that for the common man poverty was a great evil. He said, 'Poverty brings a man to the brink of loss of faith in God.' In the revelation God mentions as one of the blessings conferred on the Prophet that he was originally poor and God had granted him freedom from want. It is a famous saying of the Prophet that poverty blackens a man's face in both the worlds; every effort, therefore, must be made to ward it off. But this was only one aspect of his economic outlook. He was equally, if not more, afraid of superfluous wealth which makes the possessor luxurious, callous and unjust. `I am not so much afraid of your proverty as of your wealth.' A man is as much enslaved by wrongfully hoarded wealth as he is degraded by poverty. The middle path of

economic sufficiency and security is the path of all social justice and all genuine culture.

Muhammad was determined to liberate man economically. Let us glance at the chief measures that he adopted:

(1) On account of the differences in opportunities and aptitudes some people are bound to earn more than others; even by nature some are gifted more than others. It is a falsehood to say that men are born with equal capacities. Free initiative must not be curbed; only unlawful means of the acquisition and accumulation of wealth must be stopped by legal sanctions as well as moral injunctions.

(2) Usury in all forms and speculations in trade must be legally stopped. Money must not breed without effort. Usury must not be mixed up with trade.

(3) All trade and partnership in trade even between capital and labour are allowed, where the benefits as well as the risks are shared. There should be cooperation without exploitation.

(4) The hoarding of essential commodities for profit is prohibited.

(5) Beyond a certain minimum determined by legislation the rest of walth shall be considered as a surplus and must be taxed to be spent on the less fortunate individuals.

(6) Private charity is good but the essential needs of the poor must be looked after by the state which must work as a welfare state.

(7) There must be promulgated an equitable law of inheritance; men as well as women shall inherit in accordance with a prescribed system.

(8) Although a man in his lifetime is an absolute owner of his property he cannot will it away entirely to the benefit of some and to the detriment of others. He can will away his property only to the extent of one-third. Lawful heirs must not be deprived.

(9) All ostentatious and luxurious living shall be prohibited by law. Gold should not be used except as currency or in a limited measure for women's ornaments. The wearing of silk was also prohibited for men.

(10) Living on unearned income is bad for the wealthy as well as the poor. Begging is a disgrace for man. Instead of offering charity it is much better to help the beggar to earn his living. The Prophet said, `On the Day of Judgment, the beggars shall be seen without any flesh on their face; begging makes a man "lose face".

(11) As all estates must be divided on the death of the owner, according to the law of inheritance, the law of primogeniture shall not be valid for upholding the feudal system.

One should easily see from the main items of this Islamic programme of economic reconstruction that it is a *via media* between extremes. To give away your coat also to whosoever asks you for your shirt may be the ideal of love and goodwill or non-resistance to evil, but it is not a practicable precept for common humanity nor could any state be organised on that basis; while looking up to heaven the Prophet of Islam had always his feet on the earth. Islam is not earth-rooted but it never ignores the fact that man's physical frame was fashioned out of clay and he cannot ascend to heaven without first planting his feet firmly on the earth. Unlike Christ or Buddha, Muhammad was founding a welfare state. Without agreeing with Marx that man's economic life is coextensive with his entire existence and all

other values are derived from it, the Prophet was fully conscious of the fact that economic life reacts very intimately on the advancement or retardation of spiritual or non-economic values. He realised that the dignity of human life cannot be preserved without economic security, and social justice is

Another great achievement of the Prophet was encouragement of rationality in the human attitudes towards life. Some people think that religion is based on revelation while science is based on reason supported by observation, induction and deduction. As Islam reconciled so many apparently contradictory viewpoints in every sphere of life, so did it reconcile reason with revelation. According to the Qur'an, all nature is a great revelation and the revelation of nature is full of the signs of divinity. God has revealed Himself in scriptures too, but the scripture of all scriptures is life itself and nature. A scripture as a book is an index of the book of nature which is the mother of all books, containing eternal laws, `the Preserved Tablets'. A scripture is an index and no one can understand the contents of the great book of life who reads and recites only the index. Whenever the Qur'an inculcates a great truth or promulgates a law, the rationale of it is always given. Proofs of the existence of God or His beneficence are all drawn from nature or the life of man. The Qur'an exhorts people to study the order and beauty of nature both as a means of believing in God, to lead men from creation to the creator, and to derive all sorts of benefits from knowledge, making nature subservient to his aims in order to enjoy the gifts of life. Before Islam, religion everywhere was hampering people from free inquiry; revelation and reason were not always identical, and revelation was believed to be concerned with mysteries and dogmas that were either irrational or ultrarational. It is a distinguishing feature of the Qur'anic revelation that it exhorts people to observe life and nature and reflect. `Why don't you use reason, why don't you reflect?' are oft-repeated phrases in the Book. Men of knowledge are praised in generous words and wisdom is called 'a great good.' There are numerous sayings of the Prophet putting men of knowledge much above the worshippers and even the martyrs. Acquisition of

knowledge was made a duty for every Muslim man and woman and a prisoner of war could earn his freedom by teaching the children to read and write. It was this love of knowledge which made the Muslims hunger and thirst for it and their appetites appeared to be unsatiable. The Arabs before Islam had little knowledge and no book; therefore they are described in the Qur'an as a nation of illiterates. The Prophet himself was illiterate, although gifted with the knowledge of the eternal verities of life. He told his followers to go and seek knowledge even if they had to travel to China in search of it. `Knowledge is the lost property of a Muslim; he should capture and own it wherever he finds it.' Ancient cultures of Greece and Rome and India had stores of knowledge of which they were making little use for the further progress of humanity; religious conservatism had thwarted all further advance. Christendom had almost lost the heritage of the great Mediterranean cultures. Islamic peoples unearthed all these buried treasures and they became the heirs of all the abiding elements of the cultures that had preceded them. At first they became pupils; and what greedy pupils they proved to be! Having learnt all that the world had to offer they infused into the lifegiving elements of their own distinctive genius and became the teachers of the world for about eight centuries. In human history, religious cultures have never been distinguished by free inquiry. The priestly class everywhere, by becoming monopolists of knowledge as well as of salvation, obstructed any free development of knowledge that threatened their vested interests. Organised orthodoxies have always been reactionary. Islam was an exception in this respect. Historians wonder at the leadership achieved by the Muslim world in almost all spheres of knowledge and culture in so short a time. Some European critics say that Islam was a one-man religion and one-man movement; all Islamic culture, Islamic legislation

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